TONY HUGHES

Yes

THE ESKIMO TRANCE

A Play in Two Acts

by

Maurice Rowdon

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CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

STUBB

FAWCETT

DOG

YOUNG DAVE

- - - - - - - -

S C E N E :

The interior of a trapper's hut in the North West Territories close to the Alaskan border, several hundred miles from the Mackenzie river. There are three simple beds with pelts thrown roughly over them, and a log table; no chairs, only store-chests. Three pairs of snowshoes lean against the wall near the door, and there are trappers' packs. Hanging by the window is a large frying-pan, the only cooking utensil we can see. Apparently, the cooking is done outside.

The place is in a bad state of repair: the door has no lock or handle, and swings open; the window is off its hinges. There are two sporting guns in the corner.

The only modern object in the room is a field-radio, in the corner farthest from the door.

We are on top of a hill overlooking a massive valley, and the broad window looks out on to the sky.

T I M E :

The present.

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NOTE FOR DIRECTORS

DOG, STUBB and FAWCETT are Englishmen. FAWCETT's parentage is uncertain, but he is certainly Welsh stock, as we hear from his accent; perhaps born in British Columbia, illegitimate. STUBB is a Londoner by birth; he worked in a London wood-yard until he walked out on his wife. DOG is a Somerset man, with the characteristic strong burr.

These three men probably came together in one of the trapper's towns, perhaps Eskimo Point; or in a military area like Mackenzie Bay where casual labour is needed. Or they may have met in Montreal, before any of them took a chance and came north. However they met, a common quality brought them together: loneliness and lack of ties.

They are on a mission here but exactly what it is even they don't know. There is only a radio connecting them to the other side of the valley. They've learned the rudiments of trapping to pass the time, and they try to imagine themselves real trappers or even good prospectors from fifty or a hundred years ago.

Relevant to this play are the following quotations from SIR BERNARD LOVELL, Jodrell Bank Astronomical Station:

'In the case of certain experiments which are now possible the initial steps could produce irremediable results ....

'A modification of conditions in space could influence the mental conditions of mankind ....

'It seems almost that we are moving towards the proof of the old and universal belief that connected the moon with madness.'

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INDEX OF TERMS

White-trapping is trapping by laying strychnine poisoning, illegal because the husky dogs can pick it up. A trapper's word for treacherous.

Smudge is a fire lit near the hut to keep mosquitoes away: it smoulders gently day and night.

Cache is a structure on poles to keep provisions on, so that the grizzly bears can't climb up and take it at night.

PAS was a famous prospector's station earlier this century; saloons, whorehouses, a few shops (for rye whisky). PRINCE GEORGE was the same. ESKIMO POINT and CHURCHILL were where the trappers traded their pelts. Radiun was found at ECHO POINT, as the play says. BARKERVILLE mentioned in Act II with ridicule was a shanty town from the goldrush days.

pitchblend ore --- a kind of gold; assay means to test this ore in the laboratory; it cost five pounds in the Twenties.

de luxe prospectors were the speculators, not the men who did the actual prospecting and staking out of the ground.

white-fox --- the foxes trapped in the snowy regions.

angekok and torngarsoak --- terms from Eskimo mythology which are explained in the play.

the old telegraphic trail --- this first telephonic trail in the NW territories was laid by trappers, mostly by a Frenchman on horseback. The flowers mentioned in the play are those actually to be found there.

cockroach --- adapted from the Italian as slang for priest.

placer gold in the gravel bars of the river --- the river beds were dredged for gold; placer means the sands or gravel bed that contained valuable minerals.

tailings --- refuse from the gold-dredging.

King Prempel --- an Ashanti king on the Gold Coast of Africa who massacred people and used their blood for paint.

Gillis's Grave --- where three trappers died in mysterious circumstances without a mark on their bodies, leaving their hut as described in the play; a true story.

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It is late-morning on a sparkling clear day and light is pouring through the door.

STUBB and FAWCETT sit on their beds, their heads in their hands, dosing gloomily.

STUBB is small and round, FAWCETT slim and clean-shaven. FAWCETT's long, slim face always seems startled; STUBB looks round in a gingerly way, like a man on the run.

Silence.

FAWCETT starts, looks towards the door, his eyes wide, then relaxes again. STUBB opens his eyes slowly and stares at the door, too. He suddenly grabs FAWCETT's arm, and FAWCETT jumps in a terrified way.

STUBB It's him !

They scramble to the door. There is the sound of steps and heavy breathing, and of something being dragged.

FAWCETT (delighted) Dog !

STUBB What you got, Dog ?

DOG, an enormous figure of a man, with a wild beard and bushy red hair, enters dragging an ammunition box.

He has a wild and yet abashed look which makes him squint up his eyes frequently.

FAWCETT (watching DOG as he drags the box in) Gunshot ?

DOG (wiping his brow as he lets the box fall) That's right !

STUBB How's Dave ?

DOG OK !

STUBB (with his quick hunted look) See Mrs. Dave ?

DOG No !

FAWCETT Isn't she there ?

DOG — She's there, I think ! He talks about her !

STUBB — Where'd you kip down, Dog ?

DOG — Dave's. In the shop. Behind the grain --- where he keeps the rats !

FAWCETT — You didn't even glimpse her ?

DOG — Well --- (blinking) I thought I did --- once !

STUBB — (warmly) You did ? Where ?

DOG — Just --- disappearing round the hut. I thought so. (Sitting on the box, still wiping himself) He just calls her Mrs. Dave --- I think.

FAWCETT — (fixing him with his eyes) What's she look like, Dog ?

DOG — I didn't really glimpse her --- just an idea --- like a feeling. (After a pause) On the plump side, maybe. (Bursting out) Why couldn't she come out and shake my hand ?

The others look at him sympathetically.

Are we scarecrows or something ?

STUBB — She might have been down the lake.

DOG — She was there. (Pausing again) She must have been there ! He said --- 'See that hut ? That's where she is !'

STUBB — Dave said that ?

DOG — Yes !

FAWCETT — (quickly) They're not married ?

DOG — Married ? He said she was a schoolteacher, come from Winnipeg, to help him with the children. He never clapped eyes on her before !

STUBB — But he called her Mrs. Dave !

DOG — She didn't come out and shake me by the hand, that's all I know! That's just like him --- keep her back like that. (Pausing) I don't go across that valley often. It's a twenty-mile hike ! And if you don't keep to the path ---! (makes a meaning gesture --- of being shot)

STUBB — You got supper all right ?

DOG — Oh, yes ! You know how he is. Grinning all the time.

STUBB — Did you get the mail ?

DOG — (scornfully) Mail ! No, I missed it. I thought, to hell, I'm not waiting all morning for <u>that</u> !

STUBB — You'd have had to wait two years, maybe !

DOG — Shut up !

FAWCETT and STUBB cease watching him, and also sit down.

Husky-dogs bark in the distance. Then it is quiet again.

FAWCETT — Dave's huskies ---

A pause.

STUBB — (to DOG) We knew you was there all right by the dogs --- right to the minute, like always.

DOG nods indifferently.

(Glumly) You didn't see nobody ?

DOG shakes his head like a child, pouting and almost in tears.

DOG — He just left the food out. And a bed. (Lips quivering) Like a leper !

STUBB and FAWCETT look at him sympathetically.

STUBB — You didn't see him or hear him ?

DOG shakes his head.

FAWCETT — But you got a glimpse of the dame, you said !

DOG — (blinking doubtfully, unwilling to let him down) Well ....

FAWCETT — (eagerly) <u>Did</u> you ?

DOG — I thought I did ....

FAWCETT (with contempt) 'Thought' !

DOG (angrily) They stick me in a hut five hundred yards away ! Barbed wire all round !

STUBB (in astonishment) Barbed wire ?

DOG It seemed to gleam --- like bared wire !

FAWCETT (his eyes glinting and fascinated) You could have crawled up --- taken a peek at this dame ! (Suddenly cackling with laughter) She might have fallen in love with your beard !

DOG (leering) I'm tired.

STUBB (half to himself) Barbed wire ...

DOG Well, I'm not sure. (Trying to make a definite picture) I know he's got a gun trained on the cabin door, for when you try and get near him. That's for certain !

STUBB (nodding) And why else would he send his son up here with the mail ? He could give it to you himself !

DOG That's right !

FAWCETT He don't want you peeking at his dames !

STUBB He wants you up here --- going crazy ! And if you try and break out --- !

DOG (interrupting him) Shut up !

FAWCETT (his indignation directed at DOG) Even a walk's not allowed ! We can fish a mile offshore, and three miles out there's the finest fishing in the North West Territories !

DOG (gazing at him steadily) You eat too much fish, Fawcett. It makes you lustful.

A pause.

STUBB (with the same implied blame on DOG) These guns are to shoot at people --- not creatures !

FAWCETT Even Dave don't know why we're here, I reckon.

X to Dog Chain (behind it)

END OF 1

STUBB — He gets his pay packet once a month but he don't know where from and it's dead money because he can't spend on trees and lake-water, which is all he's got --- and a whore he keeps locked up !

FAWCETT — If he goes to town he's a dead man inside an hour, he told us so himself ! No police investigation, 'suicide while of unsound mind,' he said so himself. (Dreamily) Or was that Long Martin ?

STUBB — He says we're unsafe, that I do know.

DOG — (grudgingly interested) Unsafe ?

STUBB — We've got it in our bodies --- !

DOG — (alarmed) What ?

STUBB — It's working in our bones, it's --- !

DOG — Shut up ! (Then quietly) I've told you before, them towers has ears (with a glance outside).

FAWCETT — (in a lower voice) I'll tell you something, every creature knows why he's on the earth but we don't, we don't belong, the birds don't seem to like us, it isn't our furniture if you see what I mean, all these trees and that ---!

DOG — (quietly again) You're Fawcett. He's Stubb. I'm Dog.

FAWCETT — That's not your name !

DOG — It's the aptest name I ever had, cockroach.

STUBB — We're not trappers --- !

DOG — (flaring up again) We're three trappers, get that into your nut ! We trap, those are our pelts, they're what we sleep under, therefore we're trappers ! We're trappers in trapping country !

STUBB — Except we're under orders. To a man under orders.

FAWCETT — ~~Everything we got is government issue. The shack, the traps, the guns~~ --- And how do you account for the concrete ?

DOG — It's just there, cockroach. ~~And as for government, government is dreams. Somebody dreamed it once in his head. Same as concrete.~~

They give up in puzzlement.

A opause.

Suddenly STUBB nudges FAWCETT to tell DOG something.

FAWCETT (remembering) It's the fifteenth of July, Dog. I worked it out.

STUBB (to DOG) He says it's election day. I said I thought the eighteenth.

DOG (suspiciously, to FAWCETT) Why --- you anxious to step into my boots ?

FAWCETT (with his startled look) Me ?

STUBB Is he right, Dog ?

DOG Sure it's election day ! (Again to FAWCETT) You never miss, do you ?

FAWCETT It's our constitution ! We agreed on it !

DOG That's not why you remember !

FAWCETT Why, then ?

DOG (turning away, blinking) Jealousy !

The other two are silent in a contrite way.

FAWCETT (suddenly, sniffing) I smell grizzly !

DOG (half to himself) Like hell you do !

STUBB They was round last night, Dog. They near on climbed the cache.

DOG That's for Fawcett to mend ! (Without looking at FAWCETT) He'll be fixing a ladder for 'em next !

STUBB (jokingly) They can stamp you to pulp, Fawcett !

DOG (harshly, to FAWCETT) And look at this door ! How many more nights are you going to barricade us in with snowshoes ? And the window ! (Turning away impatiently, since FAWCETT shows no sign of responding)

STUBB — Remember that summer we saw steam coming up from a hole, it was after a thaw, it must have been the spring, and Dave jumped straight down into a grizzly's lap ?

DOG — And the grizzly didn't even wake up !

FAWCETT — (waking up suddenly) Well, so Dave says, but Dave's a bloody liar !

DOG — He's kept you in provisions for a couple or three years, sweetheart, and hasn't overcharged. You take the name of the Provider in vain and he might not provide any more.

FAWCETT — Well, I reckon he don't do it for nothing.

DOG — We all do it for nothing.

STUBB — We get nothing, that's true !

DOG — (still to FAWCETT) He showed you how to make a cache. He taught you all you know. How to stretch the pelts. Lay the traps. Clean your guns. Keep a smudge against mosquitoes. What's wrong with that --- did you want his blood as well ?

STUBB — (to DOG) But he couldn't introduce you to his whore !

There is silence. Then DOG gets up wearily.

DOG — O.K. ! Let's get it done with !

The others rise as well.

STUBB — As if we didn't know --- !

DOG — (cutting him short angrily) Well, if you know, waive the formalities --- but there's him (indicating FAWCETT) to contend with !

STUBB — O.K., O.K. ---

DOG — Well, get it done with --- who's chairman ?

STUBB — Fawcett.

FAWCETT — It's always me. Because I get no votes. O.K. --- a show of confidence for me, by raising the hand.

He waits, but neither of the other two raises his hand.

FAWCETT (threatening) Why, you mean couple of --- !

DOG Get on with it !

FAWCETT For Stubb. A show of hands.

DOG raises his hand.

FAWCETT (reluctantly) For last year's Dog ! a show of hands.

Only STUBB raises his hand. FAWCETT keeps his arms firmly at his side.

DOG (glowering at him) That's one for Stubb and one for me --- so you decide ! Stubb's our Dog, is that it ?

FAWCETT hesitates.

Well, come on --- ! It's Stubb you want !

HE and FAWCETT stand glaring at each other.

I'll give you ten seconds ! What's it to be ?

At last FAWCETT raises his hand, still glaring at DOG.

Thank you !

STUBB Just what I said !

FAWCETT (to DOG) Was I going to vote him Dog (meaning STUBB) ?

DOG Don't blame me for it, that's all ! (Sitting down again) It's circumstances.

FAWCETT I've never seen you raise your hand for me, that's all !

DOG (mildly) You're power-hungry, Fawcett, that's why! You'd be starving us of fires at night and keeping the pelts to yourself if we made you Dog.

FAWCETT And where did you get your education --- at the whorehouse reading-room down at Pas ?

END OF (2)

(3)

GARRIER

DOG — Oh, listen to that --- he's bitter ! Listen, if you want to be Dog take it --- I'll call you Dog a hundred times a day --- but that wouldn't be free election, would it ?

FAWCETT — (quietly) O.K., O.K., you're Dog.

STUBB — The same every year (with a sigh) !

They relax again, yawning, scratching themselves, gazing before them.

Suddenly there is a distant shot from across the valley.

DOG — (jumping up furiously) She's shootin', for Christ's sake ! Dave's whore ! Like a man ! (Turning to STUBB) She's laying trap-lines like a man --- yet she couldn't shake me by the hand --- !

STUBB — O.K., take it easy !

DOG — What's she shootin' at --- can you tell me that ?

STUBB — (with a wink at FAWCETT) A timber-wolf.

DOG — (taking him seriously) A timber-wolf, my arse ! So that's how it's going to be from now on --- showin' us she's there ! A woman ! In trousers ! Talkin' with a gun !

There is silence while he stands glaring across the valley, with a very slight bewilderment in his anger.

STUBB — (looking away) You're bushed ---

DOG — 'Woman' ! It's nowhere I can see ! It's just rolls of fat !

FAWCETT — (with immediate fierce interest) Is that how she looks ?

DOG shrugs.

I think she's thin, with glasses on --- (Gazing before him)

STUBB — And I think she's---fattish --- I agree with Dog --- fattish with lovely ---

END OF (3)

WAY WERE (4) HERE
CAUGHT. RUSHED

DOG — That's enough ! (Contemptuously) Stop thinking --- thinkers ! (striding up and down) That's no woman !

DOG — (glancing across the valley as if it had contradicted him) A woman carries her flesh, well, (quietly) like a kind of angel. Like we was reading about, remember (looking down at STUBB and FAWCETT)?

FAWCETT — It's always angels or something ! Angels are men, anyhow.

DOG — (turning on him) They're any sex !

FAWCETT — Angels ? They're boys !

DOG — Tell him, Stubb !

STUBB — I seem to remember they're both. Gabriel, like we was reading --- was he a he or a she ?

FAWCETT — A he.

STUBB — The two fallen angels, that started up hell, was women, I seem to remember.

DOG — (striding again) Women ! I've seen women in my day --- ! (To FAWCETT) Remember Flaming Ethel down at Pas ?

FAWCETT — Do I ?

DOG — (to STUBB) She used to keep the most miniaturest revolver you've ever seen in her stocking, and she never took it out, it was there all the time and you had the feeling it might go off --- ! Remember that ?

FAWCETT — That's right !

Silence, as they about this, smiling.

STUBB — I always used to think you got like the air when you came up here --- clear all the way through, like you see Dave's cabin of a morning on the other side of the valley, like a piece of canvas. (A pause) Did you think so, too ?

DOG — No. (Another pause) Yes, I did.

FAWCETT — So did I.

STUBB — And it didn't happen. We're getting bushed --- a bit more every day ---

DOG — So what keeps you here ? (Glaring at them both) You're a couple of lame ducks ! You're lousy drunks ! You sit at a table with a couple of pints of rye in your guts and because the dice says six you --- uccch !

STUBB — You did the same.

FAWCETT — In fact, you laid the bet.

DOG — (imitating them) 'You laid the bet, you laid the bet' --- I always get that ! You had it in your faces, you couple of white-trapping lice --- you asked for that six !

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) Listen to that !

DOG — You think you're strong --- what's strong about signing up for voluntary imprisonment for five years --- without a prison, without a sentence, without a crime ?

STUBB — (uncomfortably) It takes strength --- don't it ?

DOG — No, it's just pigheaded and proud, that's what ! It's just conceit ! And when you get back to Pas and plant yourself in Amy's whorehouse and don't need your trousers for a week --- !

STUBB — (laughing) That's good !

DOG — Who's going to look at you ? Who's going to remember ? Who'll even know your name ? Can you tell me that ? Will Amy be there ? They'll all be dead ! The saloon won't be there where you threw the dice ! 'Five years' !

FAWCETT — That's the beauty of it.

DOG — That's right --- talk to me about beauty !

FAWCETT — There won't be anybody there. Nobody'll remember. There'll just be us.

DOG — That's right, thinker !

FAWCETT — There'll just be our lives, like signing your name in water, as somebody said down at Pas when I was prospecting.

END OF (4)

(5)

STURBS CONFESSION
GILLISS GRAVE

DOG — That's it, that's it !

FAWCETT — Just between yourself and God, if you follow me !

DOG — Oh, I follow you, I've been following you for near on three years --- (bellowing at the top of his voice) but I want some NOISE --- some real NOISE, do you hear me, not your voices any more --- some NOISE !

There is another shot in the distance. DOG gapes in the direction it came from.

STUBB — You got your noise, mate. (With a wink at FAWCETT)!

DOG — What does she mean --- ? (He stops, trying to puzzle something out)

STUBB — You're bushed.

FAWCETT — (with a sigh) Every election day there's something crazy !

DOG — (turning on him again) And that's because of me, I suppose ! (Scornfully) Electing me Dog ! What a name !

STUBB — It was your name. We'll spell God the wrong way round, you said.

FAWCETT — You've certainly been that ! God the wrong way round !

DOG — (squinting at him dangerously) Meaning I'm the devil ?

FAWCETT — (with fear) I didn't mean exactly that !

STUBB — (to DOG) He means like he said the other night.

DOG — What was that ?

STUBB — About you running messages between God and us.

DOG — (appeased) Oh, that ! (Looking out across the valley again) There might be something in that.

A pause.

STUBB — Can you see the flag ?

DOG — No.

STUBB — Put your telescope up.

DOG — (quietly) Why, who's going to write you mail ?

STUBB — It was that last letter --- I ---

DOG — (with a sigh) O.J., O.K. ---

FAWCETT — There we go !

STUBB — (almost in tears) What's she have to rub it in for? She don't have to write ! It makes me think --- of the kitchen, where's she sitting. And her --- front ---

FAWCETT — (mournfully, as if they'd heard it a hundred times before) Oh !

STUBB — (in tears) What am I doing here ? I don't remember what happened !

FAWCETT — A cool son-of-a-bitch happened !

STUBB — (in a strange reasoning way) He wasn't cool, mate --- he was on the same bench ---

DOG — Yes, yes !

STUBB — We used to give each other ---

DOG — --- 'a smoke at teatime !' (With disgust) Oh, Christ !

STUBB — We did !

DOG — (to himself) Five years ! (Glaring at both of them) And where's it going to get you ? I'll tell you where --- where it got the boys at Gillis's Grave, down at Manson Creek !

FAWCETT — (with his startled look) What's that ?

DOG — Never hear ?

FAWCETT — No.

DOG — There was a couple of trappers --- they'd been trapping ten years or more. Found dead, sitting up against a couple of trees, each side of a dead fire, froze stiff, they was nearly covered over with autumn leaves, they'd been sitting there a long time, all winter long ---

FAWCETT — Yes, I think I heard ---

DOG — There was a rusty frying pan by the fire. A few yards on there was the other one ---

STUBB — There was three ?

DOG — That's right. He was leaning against a tree, too. His rifle was cocked, none of the bullets was fired. Not a mark on their faces. Just sitting there. Their hut was a couple of hundred yards up the hill. The door was swinging open. There was a bundle of letters nailed to the table.

STUBB — What did the letters say ?

DOG — They was eaten by rats.

FAWCETT — That's the way to go out --- like Flaming Ethel used to say down at Pas, 'Just sit and fall asleep'!

STUBB — (to DOG) They could have got some white bait in their food --- strychnine kills straight off.

DOG — How do you get white bait in a frying pan ?

FAWCETT — A moose comes along and gets trapped ---

DOG — What ? Would you cut up a moose you hadn't shot ?

FAWCETT — They might have been desperate !

DOG — In the middle of summer ? With all the fish in the lake ?

FAWCETT — Oh, this was summer ?

DOG — How else would they be sitting out there --- how else would they be going along the traps at all ? It's only nuts like you who stay out in the wintertime and have to have the frostbite rubbed out of their fingers !

STUBB — (to FAWCETT) And how about the letters ? How did they get nailed on the table if they didn't know something beforehand ?

DOG — That's right !

FAWCETT — Because they didn't have any rat-food and the rats had to eat <u>something</u> ! (He cackles with laughter)

DOG — (with disgust) That's why you're never Dog --- !

END OF (5)

(6)

GAB. LAYS WHITE TRAPS.

1ST. FIGHT.

FAWCETT — Why ?

DOG — Because you can't be damned-well serious ! You've got that cackle at the end of everything --- (imitating him) ha ! ha ! ha ! If I do go bushed, it'll be your long face sent me !

FAWCETT — You was bushed before you ever set foot in Prince George, mate !

DOG — I was bushed to set foot in Amy's whorehouse and get to know you !

STUBB — Me and Long Martin had just sold two hundred fox at Eskimo Point for eighteen hundred dollars, remember that ?

DOG — (relaxing) You could have got double the price at Churchill !

STUBB — We was in a hurry !

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) You and Long Martin must have looked a scream together, setting the traps --- the long and the short of it !

STUBB — (comically) I have my dignity.

FAWCETT — You need it, mate !

DOG — The biggest let-down I ever had was when they found radium at Echo Point. I must have walked over that ground about fifty thousand times ! It took five pounds to have a bit of pitchblend ore assayed in those days and I didn't have it --- I didn't even have a couple of cents ! That was a big rush. Eldorado Gold Mine shares went up to eighteen shillings a share ! They all came in aeroplanes, all the de luxe prospectors !

Silence.

FAWCETT — Did you say Dave's whore has rolls of fat ?

DOG — That's it !

FAWCETT — From just a glimpse ?

DOG — (with a wink at STUBB) I can tell from the way she fires a gun !

STUBB — Ha !

DOG — That's not tall and thin ! That's a heavy domineering type of woman !

FAWCETT — Yes ?

DOG — (with authority) In any case, she lays white traps.

FAWCETT — (suddenly rejecting this) To hell with you ! Just because you found a dead fox from last winter !

DOG — On her line !

FAWCETT — What does that prove ? Suppose Young Dave laid it? I wouldn't put it past him !

DOG — It's a greenhorn's trick, that's why ! Young Dave knows better than that !

STUBB — (to FAWCETT) What's wrong in a white trap anyway ?

DOG — What ?

STUBB — I'm getting to think it's better.

DOG — Well, listen to that --- he's been trapping and stretching pelts for three years and he suddenly gets humane !

STUBB — You know it yourself, mate --- the animals suffer, they bite off their legs, they starve to death, they're eaten alive by their own kind, sitting in a trap like that. I reckon a real man don't do that, for money or anything else.

DOG — (suspiciously) So that's it ? I've heard you use them words before --- ! (Squinting at him) You ---

STUBB looks questioningly at FAWCETT.

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) He means 'real man.'

STUBB — (blinking at DOG) What ?

DOG — (still smouldering) Should we all be sitting down in Montreal writing accounts --- is that it ?

STUBB — We could run mink farms --- silver white fox farms. It's the big thing in the south !

DOG — The pelts aren't so good !

STUBB — They sell all right !

A silence, during which DOG continues to squint his eyes dangerously at STUBB, who begins to look uncomfortable.

DOG (quietly) I'm not quite a 'real man' --- is that it ?

FAWCETT He didn't say that !

DOG (turning round on him) Keep your mouth shut ! (He slowly puts his hand on his rifle, still staring at STUBB)

STUBB (frightened but without moving --- in a whisper) Now, then, Dog.

DOG I know what's in your mind ! (Grips hold of the rifle) You mean I'm a pouf, eh ?

FAWCETT Drop that !

STUBB has his eyes fixed on the gun in a terrified way.

STUBB Dog ---

Suddenly DOG picks the rifle up as if to point it and STUBB dashes to his feet.

FAWCETT (trying to reach over) Drop it !

DOG lifts the rifle and begins to sight it calmly. STUBB is trembling all over.

STUBB (running) Dog ! Dog ! Stop him, Fawcett, for Christ's sake !

He sees DOG taking aim and in desperation doubles himself up on the floor, showing his behind, moaning and trembling. DOG takes aim on his behind. FAWCETT watches him with horror.

FAWCETT Dog, you can't ---- You can't ---

Just at the moment DOG is about to pull the trigger there is another shot from across the valley, but closer. STUBB lets out a scream, taking himself as shot.

STUBB — Oh, Christ ! Oh, Christ ! (Rolling over) He's got me, Fawcett, oh, Christ !

DOG lowers his gun slowly, watching him in a fascinated way, his head on one side. FAWCETT also watches him.

STUBB — He's done it, he's done it, oh, Christ, I knew he'd do it one day (crying) !

DOG creeps over and touches STUBB on the behind with his foot.

STUBB — (taking it as another blow) Oh, no, for Christ's sake, no --- no more, mate !

FAWCETT — (quietly) Get up, mate. He didn't fire.

STUBB looks up, astonished. DOG is towering over him.

(Beginning to cackle with laughter, and imitating STUBB) Oh, oh, he's done it, he's done it ! (Leaping round as STUBB did) Oh, Christ, oh, Christ, I knew he'd do it, oh, Christ ! (Cackling helplessly)

STUBB — There's no need to mock.

DOG — (watching him, but abashed) I just raise my gun and you go like that !

STUBB — Well, you have done it before, mate. (Glumly and reproachfully) And a gun's a gun, you know.

FAWCETT — (pointing at DOG) Look, he's ashamed !

STUBB — (walking away) So he should be !

FAWCETT — That's the first time you've set your sights on him, Dog. And yet you're supposed to be responsible !

DOG — (limply) Have another election, then.

STUBB — (to himself) Blimey ! I thought that was the end of Joe Stubb all right !

DOG — (trying to appease) You're suggestible, that's all, mate !

STUBB — But you was pointing a gun at me !

FAWCETT — That's it.

END OF 6

7

MYSTICAL D&G.

EX. TRANCE. INTRO.

GILLISS GRAVE 2nd TIME

DOG — I wouldn't have fired.

FAWCETT — You near on did ! I saw you !

DOG — (decisively) I won't stand for nomination again.

FAWCETT — Listen to it --- pride ---

A pause during which they all stare glumly before them.

DOG — O.K., I'm sorry, then.

STUBB — That's all right --- I'd like to take a gun on you sometimes.

They laugh politely.

DOG — (conversationally, to STUBB) This thing of the white traps --- how are you going to keep your huskies off the poison ? A whole pack died of strychnine down at Manson Creek ten years back.

STUBB — What I said: breed your animals instead. Don't let 'em run wild and then trap.

A pause.

DOG — (in a hesitant way) Dod you notice something ? She's getting to see my side of things ?

The other two gaze at him in silence.

FAWCETT — What's that ?

STUBB — Who's she ?

DOG — Dave's whore.

FAWCETT — What do you mean ?

DOG — She fired off just when she should have --- did you notice that ?

As they stare at him.

All right, look at me as if I was crazy !

FAWCETT — What are you talking about ?

DOG — She fired to stop me firing.

STUBB — You are bushed, you know ---

FAWCETT — Who's the 'thinker' now ?

DOG — That's not thinking, it's plain facts !

FAWCETT — Oh !

DOG — (to STUBB) She fired to stop me killing you.

FAWCETT — (with an amused glance at STUBB) Well .....

DOG — I'm not sure, mind you --- !

STUBB — (to DOG) You're better in the winter-time, mate --- not so jumpy.

DOG — Well, it's true. It's the angekok in my, I suppose. (Seeming to hope that they will ask him what the word means) That means ...

STUBB — (mechanically) 'Medicine man.'

DOG — That's right. It was the longest apprenticeship I ever served. The hardest, too. When the Eskimo feels he's been called he retires to a lonely place --- I chose Carlyle Street, Winnipeg --- I didn't hardly speak to a living soul for two years or more --- I prayed and fasted until the Torngarsoak appeared -

FAWCETT and STUBB both recite the next sentence with him, as if they know every word of his narrative.

ALL — ..... that's the great white bear.

DOG — It came up in front of the iron bedstead. Yet I wasn't surprised. He did everything they said, too. He ate me up and vomited out the pieces, and these formed together again, and the great white bear disappeared. They gave me a wife, and I used to do all their healing. I swear I had healing powers.

STUBB — Did you use the wife ?

The radio begins blinking red, a device for when it is unattended.

DOG — Not me. I've seen a few white men go native ! I didn't want the lice picked out of my hair ! And the stench of those pelts in the igloos --- ! I never really got used to it.

STUBB — As long as you don't go into that Eskimo trance again --- eh, Fawcett ?

FAWCETT — I'll say !

STUBB — Last time you looked like dead !

DOG — (quietly) We've been known to die ...

STUBB — It lasted all day --- scared the balls off me ! You couldn't answer the radio for twenty-four hours!

FAWCETT — (seeing the radio) Hey, it's showing red, Dog.

DOG — (with a scowl towards the radio) Leave it be ! It's Dave wanting to apologise. 'I'll be up for a game of cards, boys !' --- he's been promising that for near on three years !

The radio ceases to blink.

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) Remember that old telegraph trail in the Arctic, and all those flowers --- the blue lupins, saxifrage, forget-me-nots, yellow Arctic poppies? No radio there ! You had to lay it all by wire !

STUBB — That's right !

DOG — 'Flowers' ! (In a leg-pulling way) What did you do --- make posies ?

FAWCETT — That's it !

A pause.

DOG — (looking round) It's funny --- I expected her to fire then !

FAWCETT — Why ?

DOG — (with a shrug) I don't know !

STUBB — (to FAWCETT) She's the voice of his conscience ! Because he sneered at your flowers !

DOG — 'Conscience' !

They listen. But nothing happens.

STUBB — (to DOG) How do you fast at Carlyle Street, Winnipeg, Dog ?

FAWCETT — He means he didn't eat, he only drank. (With his cackle)

DOG — (disregarding him) I used to have water for breakast. If you eat nothing first thing it shrinks the stomach. Then dry bread and water for dinner. Or unsalted potatoes. ThenI went on a jag Saturday and Sunday. It usually took fourteen hours' sleep to bring me round. A jag never had less effect on me in my life. That was the fasting. I'll tell you something about fasting, I mean when you don't eat a thing for a couple or more weeks, only drink water ---

Again FAWCETT and STUBB recite with him.

ALL — ... all your diseases come out backwards.

FAWCETT — (with sudden surprise) They do ?

DOG — That's right. You get a touch of all the diseases you ever had, starting from the last one you had to the first one when you was a baby. I started with a dose of clap and ended up with nappy-rash !

They laugh. But Fawcett's cackle spoils Dog's fun.

FAWCETT — (still cackling) That's difficult to believe !

DOG — It's true ! Ask anybody who's fasted. It purges you right through. Ask any of the shipwrecked fellows, they'll tell they didn't even want to eat. The trouble's eating again, you don't want it !

STUBB — You get out of the habit, I suppose.

A shot, from the same distance.

DOG — (flaring up) Now --- ! (Taking the shot as a challenge to his truthfulness)

FAWCETT and STUBB gaze at each other.

FAWCETT — (with a wink at STUBB) What did that one mean ?

DOG is gazing across the valley with his mouth open.

DOG — (to himself) We,, I did want to eat, I suppose. I wanted a jag --- how's that ? Not exactly food, but a prolonged jag. (Addressing the valley) Now is that all right ?

STUBB (to FAWCETT) Listen to it !

DOG (still addressing the valley) I wanted a jag --- to --- purge myself. It was part of the fast. I wanted --- (insipidly) well, a carnival, release of the spirit - !

A shot.

The devil --- ? Why, you --- !

The others sit staring at him.

But it's true --- it's --- (He stops)

FAWCETT (another wink at STUBB) Is it true ?

DOG (wearily) No. I just wanted a jag, that's all. Just to get disgusting drunk and flop out on a bed. Like suicide for half-a-day.

He stares emptily before him.
They listen. Silence.

FAWCETT That seemed like the truth !

STUBB You're bushed !

DOG (eagerly) I'll try an experiment, I'll --- (Staring across the valley)

STUBB (scared) Keep your hand off that gun, that's all !

DOG I'll see if we're tuned !

FAWCETT What ?

DOG (speaking in the direction of the valley) Fire --- in ten seconds ---

STUBB Hey ! (Superstitions aroused)

FAWCETT Sssh ! (He quickly reads his watch) Five --- ! Six --- !

They listen. A shot.

DOG (excited) What was that --- was that ten seconds? God above ! Who's bushed now, eh ?

FAWCETT About seven seconds.

END OF. 7.

DOG — It's near enough ! Wake up, Stubb --- !

STUBB — (with disgust) Oh, Christ ---

DOG — (to the valley) Fire when I say --- (turning to FAWCETT) Who was that in the bible-reading last night --- ?

FAWCETT — Eh ?

DOG — The guardian angel --- the one who brings peace --- you said she was a man and Stubb said she was a woman --- !

FAWCETT — Oh, Gabriel !

A shot.

DOG — That's it ! (Jumping up and down) By Christ, I didn't mean her to be that exact --- I --- !

STUBB — (shaking his head) Look at it, just look at it ---

DOG — That's the word I meant --- I meant her to fire on Gabriel --- !

A shot.

STUBB — Blimey !

DOG — (beyond himself) That's it ! That's it ! Oh, Christ, that's it !

FAWCETT — (wary for the first time) Listen --- you'd better stop ---

DOG — Gabriel ! (A shot) Gabriel ! (A shot)

FAWCETT — (frightened) Now shut up !

DOG — Gab --- !

FAWCETT — --- Shut up ! Do you hear me ? Shut up !

DOG — (panting) O.K. But --- don't say I'm wrong ! Eh ? (To STUBB) Who's wrong about the shots ?

FAWCETT — Just calm down ! If it's true or not don't make any difference --- just calm down !

Silence. They gaze before them and gradually calm returns.

That's impossible.

8

~~END OF 7~~

8

GOD

FAWCETT'S CONFESSION.

STUBB'S REPEAT CONFESS.

GOD-WOMAN-WHORE

~~FAWCETT That's impossible~~ --- !

DOG Impossible ? I told you the story of Gillis's Grave --- strange things happen up here --- !

FAWCETT O.K.. O.K. !

DOG (still excited) --- letters eaten away by rats --- not a mark on their bodies --- door leaning open !

STUBB That's funny we should have talked about Gab --- !

FAWCETT Sssh !

DOG What ?

STUBB G --- !

FAWCETT Stubb !

STUBB (almost whispering) Gabriel.

A shot. He jumps.

STUBB Blimey !

DOG There !

STUBB (to himself) Blimey ---

DOG (to FAWCETT) Don't talk to me about impossible after that !

FAWCETT (trembling) Well, just don't let's say that word again, that's all !

DOG Why not ? I thought you was silence's best friend! ~~Until it happens ! Like the storm on the lake~~ --- !

FAWCETT Don't say that !

DOG Just a little wave --- !

FAWCETT (pleading) No, please !

STUBB (to DOG) Leave him alone !

FAWCETT I did all I could ! I --- !

STUBB (to DOG) You've done it now !

DOG ~~(quietly) O.K., O.K., I didn't mean it ---~~

FAWCETT (almost in tears) I could hear her crying ! They say you can't shout when you're drowning but she did ! A kind of a long call, like a moan or a crooning noise, like an Indian calling --- she went up and down in the water --- she lost her foothold, you see --- she was being taken further and further off - well, I'm just standing there --- I just start to wade in with my hands stretched out, can you imagine that ? --- what a thing to do ! And she was fifty yards away ! And I couldn't swim --- there I was stretching out my hands --- !

DOG If you couldn't swim --- there's nothing to be ashamed of ---

FAWCETT But I was so ashamed ! Then all of a sudden the lifeguard came down with a boat --- it was off Vancouver Island --- !

STUBB You said a lake !

FAWCETT Vancouver Island, I said ! And he pushes the boat out --- he takes hold of her arms and pulls her in --- I never seen a life saved so easy ! He even rowed with one hand ! And all I did was stand and watch ! She was thin --- with glasses on ---

DOG 'Vancouver Island' ! They all come here with their dreams --- expect the air to wear 'em down --- but it don't !

FAWCETT ~~Well, God forgive me, that's all !~~ In three years ~~of silence~~ you'd think he'd have spoken.

STUBB Who ?

FAWCETT God.

STUBB (with a twinkle) He just ain't talkative, mate !

DOG He's talkative all right to them with ears !

FAWCETT Meaning --- ?

DOG You've been on many a jag since your cockroach-days, Fawcett, and you haven't asked forgiveness for <u>them</u>!

FAWCETT It's O.K. for you. You was never in the cloth, I believe ?

DOG — Cloth be damned ! Cloth don't change a man !

STUBB — (with sly humour) What's wrong with a cockroach having a drop of --- ?

FAWCETT — (persuasively) It's a mission ! It's a trust ! That's why ! And I failed the trust ! Can't you see that ?

STUBB — You wasn't cut out for the life, mate, that's all !

DOG — (reminiscing pleasantly) Remember we used to fish of a Sunday --- regular --- take a boat on the lake --- have the days all marked up --- Monday for washing --- Tuesdays for the cache --- Wednesday the pelts and Dave's store --- those were early days !

STUBB — That's right !

FAWCETT — (reflecting) I used to run a communion-class and a child asked me once, 'Why can't we see the rest of God's body ?' I said, 'What do you mean ?', and he said, 'We can see God's face in the moon, why can't we see the rest of him ?' And do you know what I said ?

DOG — No ?

FAWCETT — I said, 'What you see is the face of a man, your own face, reflected in the moon.'

STUBB — I thought God was a copper when I was a kid. The night was his dark-blue uniform, when he came up close, to see you was all right when you was asleep.

DOG — (to FAWCETT) And now you know better ?

FAWCETT — That's right. Now I know that that child was right.

A pause.

STUBB — (in a matter-of-fact way) A policeman came to the door and he said, 'I hear you've been getting violent ?' And I said, 'Oh ?' He said, "Yes, the wife's been down to the station, she says she wants protection,' I told him about the lodger, with his long black coat, and he said they'd drop the case. All I did was take my belt off, show her the belt. But her going down to the station finished me. It was like the fireplace walking out of the back door. I've never felt warm since !

FAWCETT There's a Judas everywhere.

STUBB I couldn't go back now. I'd be --- sick ! That fireplace with the little black bars in front --- the way the clock ticks of a Saturday afternoon --- my waistcoat used to smell of wood shavings, from the mill, it used to get in my hair. (Looking at the others) You've saddled yourselves with this for life. Dying can't be much different. You can't go back now. He'd shoot you dead. And nobody'd be the wiser.

DOG There's always a woman in it. Not women --- just one woman. The same one every time. (Nodding towards the valley) There she is again --- the same one.

~~FAWCETT Who do you reckon this Mrs. Dave is ?~~

DOG She come from Winnipeg --- that's all Dave said. She's so brainy she's evil, he said, and very handy with a gun !

FAWCETT Because there was a schoolteacher down at Pas, too --- had a big let-down in love, so Long Martin said. Suppose this is her ?

DOG Long Martin's a liar. He's also the biggest pimp in the North West Territories. He runs three whorehouses in Fort Churchill alone, to my knowledge.

FAWCETT That's what he said, anyhow --- she had a big love-hitch.

STUBB (to DOG) He was no pimp when we was prospecting together, that's all I know !

DOG But he found trapping was slow money --- he needed a lot of hot money, illegal !

STUBB That's no proof he's a pimp.

DOG Ask Dave ! Flaming Ethel told him over at Pas !

STUBB Over at Pas --- that's where tall stories are hatched ! Down at Fort St. John or Hudson's Hope you don't hear of whorehouses !

DOG Flaming Ethel says he pulled out a wad of fifty-dollar bills --- threw it across the table --- said keep it ! You don't get that trapping !

~~STUBB You get it dicing.~~

DOG — ~~She said he didn't touch the cards all week. He was looking round for white traffic all the time. She told him, keep off girls. That's a pimp !~~

FAWCETT — (eagerly) I feel like slipping across the valley tonight and knocking at her cabin-door. She might throw me the key ! Then I'll slip it in --- the key I mean ! (He cackles with laughter)

DOG looks at him with disgust. FAWCETT's laughter subsides and he begins looking surreptitiously at his pack on the ground.

DOG — (watching him closely and talking to STUBB) I do believe he's serious, my God !

FAWCETT — (hesitantly) I thought for a night --- I ---

DOG — You'll stay here ! We're not having a week of wailing and gnashing of teeth, is that right, Stubb?

STUBB — That's right.

DOG — If you want a jag go down to Pas and stay there a week --- break your bet --- but you're not turning this valley into your vicarage --- !

FAWCETT — Vicarage ! (Starting towards him) You --- !

DOG — Watch it !

FAWCETT — (drawing back because of DOG's grim look) All I wanted to do was tell you what she's like !

DOG — Go down in the daytime, feast your eyes and come back. But we're not having you try and get us to burn your hands with flaming logs and Christ knows what else --- tie your hands up and whip your backside --- sling soil all over your face --- no, sir !

STUBB — (to DOG) Remember him putting a sack over his head --- that's what he thought sackcloth and ashes was ! Blimey, you ought to have seen his face !

FAWCETT — (to DOG) I need a jag !

DOG — You need the remorse after, too. But you're not getting it up here. Not while I'm Dog. You want to break the bet, go down and break it, stay at Amy's for a couple of weeks, she'll give you plenty to gnash your teeth about, and a dose of something, too,

END OF (8)

(9)

STUBB & FAULKETT

1ST. MISTAKEN IDENTITY

FAWCETT — I never had a vicarage. Your education don't stretch that far, it seems.

DOG — (laughing) It'd be some vicarage ! With cubicles on every floor !

FAWCETT — (smiling unwillingly) 'Cubicles' ---

STUBB — Remember those cubicles at Prince George --- with the boys answering each other over the walls ?

DOG — And the trapper from Eskimo Bay who sat on the bed and just looked at her for a couple of hours, and paid double the price and went away ? There's a lot of strange love in the human breast !

STUBB — That's right.

DOG — I'll tell you something. Before I came up here I thought I'd have a tough time. ~~I thought not just a tough time with the freezing cold and the yak-food but tough with the other boys~~ --- plenty of fights, knife-brawls and jags every night. ~~Big muscley fellows who'd knock you down if you breathed too deep.~~ I was frightened. But there's less of that than down below ! ~~We're like the animals --- they don't scrap each other, only for food or their mates or protection --- not just for a scrap~~ ! That's why I couldn't go back downstairs. I couldn't get back to that hardness. They're like insects ! And they all sit down there in their offices thinking --- beware of thinkers, that's what I've always told you !

FAWCETT — I couldn't go down because of the jags. The jags lack sympathy down there. (to STUBB) Know what I mean ?

STUBB — (irritated) No jags are good enough for you, are they, mate --- ever since you whored with your cassock on ?

DOG — (to STUBB) O.K., O.K. ---

FAWCETT — (to DOG) It's true what he says !

STUBB — (to FAWCETT, beginning to be fascinated) Fawcett! How did you --- ? (Wriggling closer to him) Was this on your morning visits ?

FAWCETT — Eh ?

STUBB — You just called in of a morning --- you did the rounds --- and you --- ?

FAWCETT — (as fascinated) They needed it, I tell you !

STUBB — (excited) Go on !

FAWCETT — The married --- the unmarried ! Young --- and old !

DOG — Drop it !

FAWCETT — (still to STUBB) It seemed --- to fascinate them --- being under --- ! (With a glance at DOG) know what I mean ?

STUBB — Yes, yes ! (Staring into FAWCETT's face)

FAWCETT — I might be standing there --- just inside the door --- and --- !

STUBB — (still staring at him) Hey !

FAWCETT — Yes ?

STUBB — (gripping him by the arm) You said inside the door --- ! (Peering into his eyes) Listen, weren't you - ? (To himself) By God ! It's --- ! Dog, it's --- ! Well, Christ alive !

FAWCETT begins to draw back from him.

DOG — (screwing up his eyes) What's the matter ?

FAWCETT — Stubb !

STUBB — It's --- ! It's him ! Dog, it's him ! (Shouting) You rat ! You dirty cassocky rat !

FAWCETT — What ?

STUBB — (breathlessly) There was a cassock upstairs --- behind the door --- it gave him a thrill with his cassock on --- he --- !

DOG — Where was the cassock ? (To FAWCETT) What's he talking about ?

FAWCETT shakes his head dumbly.

STUBB — At home !

DOG — What ?

STUBB — He --- was the lodger !

DOG — You're ~~bushed~~ crazy !

STUBB — The wife used to say, I'll get that long black coat of his cleaned, that funny black coat that reaches down to his feet ! (To DOG) Look, he don't say no!

DOG — (with disgust) You're bushed, Stubb ! You didn't even know Fawcett then !

STUBB — Look at his face --- he don't deny it !

DOG — Deny it, Fawcett.

FAWCETT simply stares at STUBB.

STUBB — She used to go upstairs ---

DOG — That was fifteen years before you come to Pas ! Fawcett was never in London ! Stubb !

STUBB — Look at him !

DOG — Tell him it's wrong, Fawcett ! Fawcett !

But FAWCETT still stares before him.

STUBB — The same long face --- The way he used to come downstairs, very soft ---

DOG — ~~Bushed~~ !

STUBB — (in a dreamy way) It makes us --- brothers in a way ---

DOG — Brothers !

STUBB — I knew we'd meet up again ---

FAWCETT — (also dreamily) Me, too ! Stubb --- was her name --- was she called --- Gabriel ?

A shot. The other two gasp.

FAWCETT — (seeming to wake up) Hey ! Gabriel !

Another shot.

DOG — (delighted) You did it !

STUBB — Fawcett !

END OF 9

10

2nd FIGHT
DOG · FAWCETT.

DOGS 1st CONFESS,

They rush to congratulate him.

FAWCETT (beaming) Thanks !

DOG I knew you could do it !

FAWCETT (to DOG, excited) You may be right --- she's over there to stop us getting bushed ! (Gazing across the valley)

DOG That's right ! What did I say ? (To STUBB) You wouldn't believe me ! (Shouting) Gabriel !

A shot.

FAWCETT Gabriel !

A shot.

DOG (hilariously) Gabriel !

Another shot.

STUBB Gabriel !

Silence. STUBB looks across the valley suspiciously.

(turning on them) You rats ! Trying to edge me out ! (Shouting at the top of his voice) Gabriel! Gabriel ! Gabriel ! Gabriel ! Gab --- !

A shot.

DOG At last ! (Encouragingly) How's that, Stubb, eh?

STUBB (exhausted) Thank Christ ! Thank Christ for that !

DOG She means us all --- get that into your nuts ! Now sit down !

They sit down round the table in a happy spirit.

Now I don't know about you two, but it's begun to be clear to me that --- this name, this name --- I won't say it --- means something.

STUBB and FAWCETT grunt agreement.

It means something for us. The question is what ? (A pause) Now I've got a suggestion --- I don't know how you two'll take it.

FAWCETT — What ?

DOG — She --- the name --- she's bringing us closer --- she's guiding us all the time --- to --- (He stops)

FAWCETT — Where ?

DOG — It might be something --- rich --- and marvellous --- I don't know ! We've just got to wait and see. (With an appreciative glance across the valley)

STUBB — I think she might be somebody --- connected with us ---

DOG — Connected ?

STUBB — With one of us. Just with one of us ! And we don't know which one yet !

FAWCETT — Our names are certainly writ in water, like they said down at Pas ! ~~I never saw her more than a couple of minutes, she was there bobbing up and down in the water, then she was lying on the sand, then she was gone, walking up the beach --- She never even spoke to me ! She went away with my soul ! I don't even know her name !~~

DOG — (burying his head) Ucch !

FAWCETT — When you go back downstairs, to Pas or Prince George, nobody recognises you. They say, 'Aren't you --- ?', then they stare in your face. And you don't say nothing. That's because you're different now. Your life goes along like water, you don't belong to places any more --- That's why I came up here.

DOG — To find out you was made of water ?

FAWCETT — That's right !

STUBB — I heard a doc say it was true. He said we could be melted down !

DOG — (nodding) I tried to melt away in Kumasi. But the heat didn't do it. Nor did the monsoons, though it was pretty wet. Yes, indeed ! I had a punkah-wallah worked the fan for me.

The radio blinks red again.

STUBB — You did ?

FAWCETT (imitating DOG) 'And a policeman out there, a white policeman, was next to God!'

DOG He was, too !

STUBB But still, you found you wasn't next to God, didn't you, mate ?

DOG It was over before I knew what was happening, I tell you !

STUBB I know !

The radio ceases again, unobserved.

DOG He was standing there --- in the governor's drawing room --- under the fan --- swish, swish, like the wings of some sort of big bird, and I can remember the pictures on the wall --- we used to call it the picture gallery --- and this little black boy was like an angel, an Ashanti-boy in white, so delicate, so humble and sweet, I had to touch him --- and he didn't say anything --- I think he even smiled --- I don't know what was in my mind --- it just happened --- I touched him --- I was getting married the next month --- !

FAWCETT (with a sigh) That's it !

DOG I was ! A magistrate's daughter --- ! But I --- ! It was only that chaplain --- a blasted cockroach --- (with sudden fury) I could have crushed him in my fingers and he'd have made a crackling sound !

STUBB Who gives a damn here ?

DOG I do ! With my hand on that little boy's cheek --- they made it dirty --- there was nothing wrong in it ! Staring at me --- in the doorway !

FAWCETT That's what they all say.

DOG Why not ?

FAWCETT If I go on a jag I don't say afterwards I've been pure ! What's so pure about --- !

DOG (understanding what he is about to say) You --- ! (He leaps across and grabs FAWCETT by the throat) Say it, say it, you cockroach, go on !

FAWCETT struggles and his face gets redder and redder.

He can only make wild strangling sounds. STUBB gets alarmed.

STUBB (tapping him on the back gingerly) Dog --- Dog, mate !

DOG seems unable to release his hands.

DOG (to FAWCETT) Say it --- say it !

STUBB Gabriel ! (Shouting across the valley) Gabriel !

A shot. DOG suddenly releases FAWCETT. They stare across the valley.

DOG (as FAWCETT tries to get his breath back) She saved his life ! She does look after us, Stubb !

STUBB (humouring him) That's it --- now just calm down, mate !

FAWCETT (recovering his speech) We're --- bushed ! We never done --- this before !

STUBB (to himself) She did save us, in a way !

DOG My hands went limp, I tell you --- when I heard that shot !

FAWCETT Thank Christ they did ! (To STUBB) Let's find a hut up the line, mate ! This one's bushed !

STUBB (to DOG) You want to watch yourself !

FAWCETT Look at his face ! Look ! (Feeling his own neck) You never done that before ! It's the finish !

He begins to walk off, still feeling his neck.

STUBB (alarmed) Where you going, mate ?

FAWCETT Find a hut up the line ! I'll go to Dave's ! He's a killer, that one ! Look at him !

STUBB Fawcett ! Come back !

FAWCETT (to DOG, who still stares up at the sky) You killed that boy ! You killed him, didn't you ?

DOG (looking at him in horror) Fawcett !

FAWCETT (seeing the effect) It's in your hands --- you've got murderer's hands ! That's what you did to the little Ashanti boy !

DOG (glancing down at his hands) Kill ! (With horror) No ! I DIDN'T.

FAWCETT (at the door) Murderer ! Murderer ! You murdered a little Ashanti boy !

DOG (screaming) No, no ! (Staring at his own hands) No, for God's sake, no ! No ! ~~Take them~~ away ! (Holding out his hands) Take ~~them~~ away, oh, for Christ's ~~sake take them~~ away ! (Bursting into ~~tears) Take them away !~~

FAWCETT (moving back, humbled) Dog --- I didn't mean ---

He approaches DOG to comfort him.

STUBB You didn't --- did you, Dog ? You didn't kill him, did you ?

DOG (hopelessly) I don't know ! I don't know !

He weeps on FAWCETT's shoulder.

FAWCETT I didn't mean it, Dog !

DOG They never told me ! They never --- let me know ---

FAWCETT O.K., O.K.

DOG (looking into his eyes like a child) They never said ! They just --- sent me away !

STUBB (to FAWCETT) Sit him down.

They help DOG to sit down.

FAWCETT What did you do, Dog ? Try and remember !

DOG I don't know !

FAWCETT What did you do to the little Ashanti boy ?

DOG (looking up and reflecting for a time) Nothing.

FAWCETT What the hell you worried about, then ?

DOG What they said - what they made me out to be !

END OF (10)

(11)

- ESKIMO HEAVENS.

GILLIS'S GRAVE 3.2

FAWCETT (turning away from him) It's pride ! What I've always said --- you're proud !

A bird suddenly flies over outside and STUBB seizes his gun and moves to the window. But he doesn't shoot.

STUBB Let him live, I thought. Probably going home to his dinner !

They sit down exhausted. DOG passes his hand over his head and sighs.

FAWCETT That's another thing. You get not to like killing birds any more. Last week I took aim at fifteen birds and didn't fire a shot. Hear that, Dog ?

DOG Uh-huh !

FAWCETT (with his cackle) Because I had no ammunition !

A pause.

STUBB All we do is live in our sins up here. I thought we'd be so pure ! But all we hear about is sins.

DOG It's all we got !

FAWCETT You're too fond of fate, ~~Dog. It's like a black hood over your head~~ !

STUBB That's why we make his Dog. --- he's always sniffing the sky !

DOG ~~You know damn-well I've got an instinct --- I'm your~~ interlocutor --- ~~between the~~ sky and you !

FAWCETT ~~Listen to it~~

DOG You can't fool the Indians ! ~~I saw the white bear~~ O.K. --- he ate me up --- in Carlyle Street, ~~Winnipeg --- and he spewed me out again~~ ! For five years I told them all about their gods --- I sat in their igloos ! I knew more about their gods than they knew themselves ! I was the first white angekok --- and the last most likely !

FAWCETT Then the stink of moose got you down !

DOG I used to sit and talk about the sky. You've got nothing so peaceful in your life, you cockroach ! I used to talk about the Eskimo heavens ---

END OF (1)

(12)

GOING DOWN.

EARTALY-COMMERCIAL-CHAT

FAWCETT — You could take that away from an Indian just by snapping your fingers ! But you couldn't take away what I learned !

DOG — About Jesus ?

FAWCETT — That's it !

DOG — It's God I'm talking about --- not the King of the Cockroaches !

FAWCETT — You're a blasphemer --- !

DOG — And you never know what he'll decide. (Speaking monotonously, almost drowsily) Like at Gillis's Grave, near Manson Creek. The cabin door swinging open, letters nailed on the table --- eaten by rats --- two men sitting up --- a rusty frying pan in between --- not a mark on their bodies --- another man fifty yards down the hill --- rifle cocked --- Cocked ---

They seem to fall asleep. Silence.

STUBB — (waking up with a start) Were they known men ?

DOG — (also waking up with a start) They were known as much as a trapper is ! A face and a name !

FAWCETT — Maybe they were on a bet, too --- like us !

STUBB — Don't talk bushed !

DOG — (gazing across the valley again) You couldn't go back down again if you wanted to !

FAWCETT — Why not ?

DOG — (to STUBB) You can talk to me about ~~white~~ silver-fox farms, but it's them's brought your prices down. ~~Not so long back beaver pelts took thirty dollars a piece, know that~~ ? All you get for the best prime pelt of silver fox is seventy dollars nowadays ! And I remember selling two hundred low-grade dark pelts for near on five thousand dollars at Eskimo Point --- myself ! Don't talk to me about ~~white~~ silver-fox farms !

STUBB — (with a wink at FAWCETT) Why, Dog --- are you thinking of going down all of a sudden ?

DOG continues to gaze across the valley as if nursing a secret.

FAWCETT (approaching DOG, intrigued) Where would you go ?

DOG (after eyeing them both for a moment) Little place by the Peace River ---

STUBB (also drawing near him, excited) He's had it all worked out !

FAWCETT What would you do ?

DOG I figured it out like this. A place like Fort St. John or Hudson's Hope, along the Peace River valley: you've got the whole of that boiling water ---

FAWCETT Yes !

DOG --- All that power in the Peace River Canyon, you've got prospects --- it's rich country --- you've got coal, you've got timber, fur, bog iron, copper --- they say there's still placer gold in the gravel-bars of the river --- !

STUBB What about that ? -- what about the dredging firms that lost their money back before the war ?

DOG I don't say that's what we'd do --- !

STUBB (digging FAWCETT excitedly) We !

DOG I say there's prospects --- there's riches all round --- in the sky --- in the water --- in the earth !

FAWCETT There'd be --- people, too ---

DOG That's right ! People you can talk to ! No more of this Gabriel stuff !

Scaffingly A short pause, then there is a shot. They eye each other.

STUBB (quietly) Let her talk !

DOG That's it ! (Turning his back on the valley deliberately) We'll go down and be among people --- We'll go in the saloons, play cards, we'll be luxury prospectors --- !

STUBB That's it !

FAWCETT We'll have horses + stables --- a fine old house up on wooden stilts --- !

STUBB — We've got the money --- cached out in those trees --- in pelts !

DOG — And what do we do ? We trade them across the valley to Dave for half-price ! Well, they say if you're trapping you're not in it for money, and that's the truth !

STUBB — Peace River !

A pause, during which they all dream about this.

FAWCETT — (quietly, looking up at DOG) How about the police ?

DOG — It's only what I think ! I don't know I did it ---! It's only what I say I did ! I don't remember ! I just think !

FAWCETT — And you'd think just the same down there !

Another silence, more glum than before.

STUBB — (pondering) We could try it. Go down for a week. Tell Dave we're selling pelts ---

DOG — No cooking --- think of that ! I can hear how my footsteps'd sound on the wood floor, going to the pelt-store ---

FAWCETT — They'd laugh at us !

DOG — (flaring up) They laugh at people who laugh at themselves !

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) You wouldn't think he gets all wound up if you move his cup of coffee an inch in the morning, would you --- if you don't have your blankets turned by half-six --- then his Bible-reading at night !

STUBB — (with a wink) He's got his little Ashanti boy to keep him warm !

DOG — (murmuring, half to himself) He keeps me good ! When I think of him --- I can see the little gold rings in his ears --- the way his teeth sparkle ---!

FAWCETT — But --- (leaning forward persuasively) being good's a struggle, Dog, a daily struggle --- it's a --- ! (He stops dead and stares in front of him)

DOG — I hate cockroaches ---

END 12

13

~~TIGHT.~~ 3

DOG - FAWCETT.

IDENTITY WITH CHAPLIN

STUBB (to DOG) Remember that time down at Pas he'd been on a week's jag and put his head in the ashcan outside Amy's saloon and got the boys to give him a welting with their straps ?

DOG Tcha !

STUBB (to FAWCETT) I bet you never even felt it, you was so drunk !

FAWCETT (who has subsided in a puzzled way after his moral speech) I saw my sheets next morning, covered with blood --- There was sores all over my back.

DOG I don't mind a Catholic cockroach, he goes on a jag and forgets, but you lot !

FAWCETT We're our own judges --- we don't send our dirty linen to the mother-church and expect it to come back clean !

They are quiet again.

DOG (to himself) 'Being good's a struggle' --- yes, I can remember that ! (To STUBB) Then he led me through the gallery down to the gaol !

STUBB (looking at him) What ?

DOG The sweat was pouring down my neck --- I can remember my knees shaking. And he said 'Being good's a struggle, Haines' --- and he puts his hand on my shoulder.

A pause, during which the other two look at him.

STUBB Who did ?

DOG The chaplain. A long-faced --- ! (Putting his hand over his eyes) I've thought about it so much--! (Looking up at FAWCETT with clear eyes) Listen --- whose idea was that ?

FAWCETT (staring at him) Eh ?

DOG What was the plan --- you must have known the Governor's mind like your own !

FAWCETT What's that ?

DOG (reasoning with him) I reckon you must have sat in his office four hours a day --- I can remember that --- you used to take your tiffin together --- !

FAWCETT (with a perplexed look at STUBB) Tiffin ? What the hell's that ?

DOG Was I getting too big for you ?

FAWCETT Big ?

DOG Too popular ? I know the language too well ?

STUBB Bushed !

DOG You can say bushed, but he knocked my career on the head inside thirty seconds !

STUBB Yes, yes !

DOG 'That little native boy' --- (imitating a chaplain's fluting voice, which is incidentally also FAWCETT's) --- 'is the Prince Regent's son, Haines. I'll have to see the Governor about this !' (To STUBB) I pleaded with him --- 'Please don't do it, chaplain, please don't --- !' But he went on walking up the stairs, I can remember the punkah wallah outside the Governor's door --- then --- up went Chief Inspector Haines in smoke --- phew --- !

FAWCETT (gazing before him sadly) I wish we was down below ---

DOG What does it make you feel like, Chaplain Fawcett ?

FAWCETT And the marble stairs. I can remember the marble stairs ! (As if illuminated) How the sunlight shone on them !

DOG That's it !

FAWCETT They were white !

DOG (to STUBB) He remembers ! You see ?

FAWCETT (radiant) But you deserved it, Haines --- you killed that boy !

STUBB 'Haines' ! It's a different name every week --- Haines, Wykham, Stornford, Crampton ! It's time you moved on to Wykham about now, isn't it (to DOG)?

END 13

14

3rd FIGHT

DOG.-FAWCETT.

DOG — Chief Inspector Haines --- until this cockroach tore me down ! Fifteen years in a sweat-bath --- I provided royalty with a wall --- my own body --- !

STUBB — (imitating him) 'And they used to call me the battering ram !'

DOG — My face was known in the highest circles --- 'Haines'll see to it,' they always said ! (He yawns unexpectedly)

FAWCETT — (looking about him) Listen to that silence !

DOG stares before him, recollecting. A pause.

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) Suppose they just fell asleep ?

STUBB — Who ?

FAWCETT — Them three at Gillis's Grave ? The cold makes you sleepy ! Suppose there's a sudden cold snap ? You freeze ! Just sitting there !

STUBB — It was summer !

FAWCETT — But a sudden wind --- like a breath --- ! It makes you sleepy --- (He yawns and stretches up) Remember that time north of the Skeena River, along the trap-line, behind the huskies --- just miles and miles of white snow --- we had to pinch each other awake --- to stop getting frost bite --- just miles and miles --- of --- white --- (He falls asleep)

DOG — 'Haines' --- (He begins to nod, sitting)

STUBB gets up, stretches and looks down at the other two.

STUBB — (also yawning) Bushed !

He begins strolling off, his hands in his pockets, whistling quietly to himself. He disappears out of the door.

Silence.

The other two sleep on, DOG still in the sitting position, his head hanging forward; FAWCETT snoring loudly.

We hear STUBB's whistle fade away.

END (14)

(15)

STOBB. - JUST FIRING AT BIRDS -

DOC'S - RECOVERY

A bird suddenly flies over but neither DOG nor FAWCETT stir. Two or three more birds fly over. Suddenly there are shots from across the valley, one after the other. FAWCETT jumps into the sitting position, panic-stricken. DOG lifts his head in a dazed way.

FAWCETT (staring at DOG with horror, as if still asleep) Haines, Haines --- don't shoot ! (As the volley continued) Haines, for Christ's sake, Haines, you're hitting me --- all over the body --- Haines! (Twitching violently with each shot, just as if he'd been struck)

DOG simply stares at him with fascination.

Haines ! Haines !

Unable to bear the 'shots' any more FAWCETT seizes his own gun and points it at DOG. DOG is at once on his feet.

DOG You --- ! It's guilt, you cockroach !

He wrenches FAWCETT's gun out of his hand and flings it aside, then wrestles with him. FAWCETT fights frantically. At last DOG overpowers him, on the floor close to the door.

(Lying on top of FAWCETT, breathless) Who's --- Haines ? Who's this Haines ?

FAWCETT (seeming to recognise him slowly) Dog ---

DOG The name's Wykham. Get that into your head --- Wykham !

STUBB dashes in and almost trips over them. They struggle to their feet and stare at him in astonishment.

DOG (peering at him) Who --- ? (Passing his hand over his face) Christ --- ! I thought it was --- a --- newcomer !

FAWCETT So did I ?

DOG A new face !

STUBB — It's always the same -- if I go away for a minute you two fight ! Every time ! Like a couple of --- brothers ! Don't you ?

DOG — He jumps on me (abashed) !

FAWCETT — He was firing at me --- like in dreams !

They notice STUBB is panting.

DOG — (to STUBB) What you been running for ?

STUBB — I've got news !

DOG — News ?

STUBB — She's firing at birds ! (He sits down on a chest heavily) That's the news. I watched 'em falling.

DOG — You saw --- ?

FAWCETT — Did you see her ?

STUBB — She bagged five in a row. I just saw the birds.

They gaze before them glumly. This is bad news, especially for DOG.

DOG — It's all disappointments up here ---

STUBB — Just like I said --- nothing talks to you up here --- get that into your nut !

FAWCETT — So what do we do ?

DOG — Go back down --- (with sorrow) There's nothing to stay up here for ---

A shot. They stares at each other.

STUBB — Another bird.

DOG — (reminiscing sadly) I asked a parson once --- we was sitting in church one afternoon --- the sun was coming through the stained glass --- I said, 'Isn't God's face in the moon, if so, where's his feet ?' And he said, 'That's the face of man, that's your face, son ---' Trust a cockroach to take the guts out of life !

FAWCETT — I can't live without somebody !

STUBB — There's just Dave over there --- and his son !

FAWCETT There's her as well !

STUBB It's only Dave says she's there. You know how he is --- with a little twinkle in his eye !

FAWCETT Long Martin says she's neat, with plenty in front, and she had a big let-down in love !

STUBB Long Martin's a pimp !

DOG He's no pimp !

STUBB What about that wad of fifty-dollar bills --- she said he hadn't played a card all week !

DOG You believe that ?

STUBB (stopping, screwing up his eyes) Hey --- ! Wasn't it you --- who told me that ? (He stops again, looking puzzled)

DOG is silent, thinking something over.

DOG And suppose she does shoot birds ?

FAWCETT What ?

DOG (to STUBB) Suppose she does ? (To FAWCETT) Let him answer --- he brought the news, after all.

STUBB It means --- she's not in tune with us !

DOG You think so ? I'm not so sure ! I'd just like to find out. (Looking across the valley) What do you say --- (suddenly) Gabriel ?

An immediate shot.

FAWCETT (radiantly) Dog !

DOG Gabriel ! (A shot) Gabriel ! (He says this one with firm confidence, his chin set)

And again there is a shot.

FAWCETT Gabriel !

Another shot.
They all three begin shouting Gabriel and there is a volley of shots as before. They dance up and down happily chanting the name as the volley continues.

At last the shots cease. They laugh happily and sit down in a busy and celebrative way --- it is like a happy reunion.

DOG — Well, thank God for it ! That's all I can say ! Thank God for a little guidance --- (winking at them) with or without birds !

The other two nod and laugh maturely at this.

FAWCETT — Does it make you feel peaceful again, Dog ?

DOG — (nodding) And clear.

FAWCETT — Me, too !

The radio blinks again.

DOG — My insides feel all right --- put it that way. Same with you ?

FAWCETT nods quickly like a child trying to please.

STUBB — Like Fawcett said down at Pas, when we laid the bet, remember ? --- 'Something's <u>got</u> to come out of the silence !'

A pause.

DOG — Another thing. It makes me hungry.

STUBB — Me, too !

The radio ceases blinking, unobserved.

DOG — What about the beans --- did you put 'em in soak, Mrs. Fawcett ? (With a gay wink at STUBB)

FAWCETT doesn't answer. He seems to be thinking.

STUBB — (nudging DOG happily) He forgot !

FAWCETT — (deliberately) Mrs. Dave don't exist !

DOG — <u>What</u> ? Now shut your mouth !

FAWCETT — She --- !

DOG — You're spoiling it, you're --- !

FAWCETT — She don't exist !

DOG — (desperately) I've seen her !

FAWCETT — You said to Dave, 'What you keep in that cabin over there, Dave ?', for a joke, and he said, with that little twinkle, 'A woman !' That's all ! For a joke !

STUBB — That's right ! I wanted to ask Young Dave but (to DOG) you wouldn't let me !

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) That's to keep his dream going ! He's driving us ~~bushed~~ mad, I tell you ! Young Dave'll be the little Ashanti boy soon !

DOG — (to himself) Don't talk bushed !

FAWCETT — But it'll take some doing --- a Canadian boy in the bloom of sixteen, with bright yellow hair, and trigger-happy, to the son of a Gold Coast tribesman.

STUBB — Dog could do it, don't you worry about that !

DOG nods, again thinking it over.

DOG — All I'd like to know is this: what difference does it make ? Something's there --- call it a she --- call it Gabriel --- !

There is a shot.

(With increased confidence but still in a level voice) Call it - Dave's whore --- it doesn't matter ! Something's talking to us, and that's all I'm interested in. (Briskly) Now, come on, get the lamps ready, Fawcett --- steam ahead --- you want us in darkness tonight ?

He rises in a businesslike way and the others follow suit, with a glance at each other.

STUBB — It's always lamps when he loses confidence !

DOG — (to STUBB) Have a look at the cache --- we don't want half the grizzly population up those poles tonight --- it seems Fawcett can't use grease !

FAWCETT — There's no more grease to use, I've told you that.

DOG (to STUBB) And look at the smudge. Whose turn for petrol ?

STUBB Mine.

DOG Then get to it. Have a look at the generators --- the tower ---

STUBB stops on his way out.

STUBB The what ?

DOG The generators.

STUBB What generators ?

DOG You always say that ! The ones outside !

FAWCETT stands watching them as if for the outcome of a contest.

STUBB Where ?

DOG (impatiently) You haven't noticed anything --- in three years ?

STUBB There's --- (he trails off dreamily)

DOG What would <u>you</u> call them ?

STUBB I don't know, I --- ! (With fear) Would you call them towers ? I'd say --- masts --- !

DOG (interested despite himself) Masts ?

STUBB With kind of wings --- that turn round and round --- not towers exactly.

DOG (hesitantly) I see them as towers.

STUBB (quickly) But what for ?

DOG (taking this as unfair) Shut up !

They stand there frightened by their own talk.

(To FAWCETT) Would would <u>you</u> say they was like ?

<u>FAWCETT</u> (eagerly) I'd say they was for the weather --- maybe weather detection --- !

END OF 15

DOG (angrily) I didn't ask you what they was <u>for</u> ! Nobody asked you that !

FAWCETT's answer has increased his fear.

STUBB And what's the good of looking every day --- concrete towers won't walk away !

DOG (shouting at him) You know your orders ! If you see a stranger, shoot ! Now get out !

STUBB (going out, rifle on shoulder) It's the only order we ever got.

The other two stand watching him go. They don't like to be reminded of the outside.

(1)

Mail. plan for
day:

Dog preparers
for Es. Hance.

II.

Only DOG and FAWCETT. FAWCETT is preparing the guns and packs for hunting.

DOG stands scanning the other side of the valley through a small telescope. He suddenly sights something.

DOG — Hey ! Look at this ! There's mail !

FAWCETT — Mail ? (Running to the door) Hey, Stubb --- there's mail !

DOG — (taking the telescope down) The last time it came was --- (He screws up his eyes painfully and stops; he can't remember)

STUBB appears, with his rifle, as if from his patrol.

STUBB — What's that ?

FAWCETT — The flag's out ! I'm expecting a letter from --- ! (He also stops)

DOG — At Carlyle Street, Winnipeg, I got forty Christmas cards one year ! I kept them on my dresser for six months !

STUBB — Remember that time we danced all night --- a new moon --- when some mail came up ? We got double price for our pelts and nobody could tell us why !

DOG — A war broke out downstairs, that's why ! Is the cache, O.K. ?

STUBB — It won't hold more'n a week.

DOG — Hear that, Fawcett ?

FAWCETT — Stubb's our cache expert !

DOG — Like hell he is ! You just don't like work ! Listen --- Stubb and me'll sit upwind today and cook ! You can sit by the Creek and pick 'em off !

STUBB — I don't like the way Fawcett shoots -- he's too deadly !

DOG — He's a cockroach, that's why !

FAWCETT — I'm a stalker, really --- I'm no good with the flying species !

STUBB — (to DOG) Remember when he brought that moose-ram down and we hadn't even seen it ?

DOG — Come on --- there's shootin' to do ! (As they inspect their guns) Wire O.K. ?

STUBB — Yes.

DOG — Generator ?

STUBB — (nodding) Beats me why we can't have light. There must be a couple of million volts out there !

DOG — Light's real, that's why.

STUBB — They say Young Dave's a spy. He only brings the mail to spy on us. To see if we're still around.

DOG — (squinting at him) Why, feeling nervous ?

STUBB — (hushed, making a gesture towards the door) But what's under that --- ?

DOG — Shut up !

FAWCETT — (turning suddenly) Why shouldn't he ask questions?

DOG — (turning on him as swiftly) Who can answer them ?

FAWCETT — But --- !

DOG — (interrupting him roughly) You can't ! That's for sure !

FAWCETT — We had issue chairs and issue washbasins once, and you had to burn the chairs --- use the basins for goldfish ! Why ?

DOG — Because them things are real, that's why !

FAWCETT — (wildly) I like reality !

DOG — (gazing at him scornfully) You ? And what are you going to shoot with, realist ? You've got no ammunition !

FAWCETT — (baffled) There's ammunition there O.K. ! (Pointing at the chest)

DOG — Are you sure ?

FAWCETT — (making a move towards it) I can look !

DOG — (keeping him away roughly) Lay off ! Ever since you elected me Dog you've been giving me the glass eye !

FAWCETT — Eh ?

DOG — Find yourself another Dog, realist. And some other dreams ... (He sits down on the chest heavily)

STUBB — (nervously) Are we going, Dog ?

DOG — I'm just tired of making it up, that's all ...

FAWCETT — (humbled) Is there anything wrong, Dog ? Shall I go ahead to the Creek ? (Trying to be bright) Beans for supper ?

DOG — I've got no more dreams to weave, boys. (Looks from one to the other) There's no Mrs. Dave. Just somebody out there shootin' birds.

STUBB — We like your dreams, Dog.

DOG — Like hell you do ! We're in a dead-end street, Stubb ! I've held the office too long.

FAWCETT — (gingerly) No, no.

DOG — It's time to recollect, boys !

STUBB — (knowing what this means) Oh, no, for Christ's sake --- not the Eskimo trance !

DOG — She ain't there any more ! (Calling) Gabriel ? ... No Gabriel. Yes, it's time to recollect ! (He continues to sit there with a blank face)

It dawns on the other two that this really will be the Eskimo trance.

STUBB — (drawing back) Dog !

FAWCETT — (also drawing back) Hey, Dog --- !

DOG continues to sit there as if forcing himself to lose consciousness. His head droops more every moment.

STUBB and FAWCETT stand close together, gazing at him in growing horror. DOG's eyes close.

STUBB (in a whisper) Dog ... Dog ... come back !

DOG's head slumps forward. He is quite still. There is a long silence.

(Without moving) What do we do ?

FAWCETT (running to shake DOG) Dog, it ain't true ! She's there all right ! Mrs. Dave's there !

But DOG remains motionless.

STUBB (with resignation) He's gone.

FAWCETT (withdrawing again and speaking hesitantly) Dog --- shall we be making up the books tonight ?

STUBB bends down and speaks into DOG's face.

STUBB Haines ! (No reply) Wykham ! Bailly ! Stornford ! (Turning to FAWCETT) What's the other one ?

FAWCETT Crampton.

STUBB Crampton ! Crampton ! (He raises himself slowly) He's on the white-bear stuff again: he's got to be spewed out in bits and then put together again. (Turning away in disgust) Tcha !

FAWCETT (persisting with DOG) Dog --- I can't keep the books like you ! Where's the rosta ? Dog ! (He turns to STUBB in alarm) He takes the signals from Dave, don't forget that ! Dog --- we can't signal! How do we get the provisions up ? Suppose there's an S.O.S. ? Listen, Dog --- I think there's an S.O.S. ! Right now !

DOG is motionless.

STUBB He's the only man can talk to the huskies, too !

FAWCETT Crampton ! Bailly !

The radio blinks S.O.S.

STUBB (in alarm, seeing it) Crampton ! There's an S.O.S.!

2

Lad Relf of Tranc.
Sn Dog Dead!

They both stare at the radio in horror, until after a few seconds it ceases. They relax a little.

FAWCETT — Don't you know one signal ?

STUBB — No !

They stare at DOG with growing fear.

FAWCETT — Who handles the husky teams now, Dog ? I feel cold !

Silence. They sit down and glance towards the radio --- no signals.

STUBB — He'll sit there till winter comes. That's what the Indians do ! Remember what he always used to say ? 'The Eskimo trance is the death of the Torngarsock, which means the death of ... (drowsily) dreams ...'

FAWCETT is staring at DOG in a fixed way.

FAWCETT — (in a hushed voice) Hey --- Stubb ! Look at his head !

STUBB — (starting) What ?

FAWCETT — He looks like the man who came to the vestry --- ! A man in the choir !

STUBB — What are you talking about ?

FAWCETT — It's true --- I swear by God ! He says, 'I've followed your career very close, Mr. Fawcett,' he says, 'and I'll have the cloth off your back ...' Standing there in the vestry door ! His big red beard --- His head hanging down like that --- They called him the shaggy mountain --- He kept the morals of the village in his head. Yet they say he died a profligate. He disliked the competition from a priest, they said. There were too many women in the village --- suffering from the same desires, Stubb --- I always used to call them such loud desires !

STUBB — What was his name ?

FAWCETT — --- Bailly, I think.

STUBB — Bailly ?

FAWCETT (springing up and approaching DOG with fascinated attention) It is Bailly ! It's his head --- when he died ! (He springs back suddenly)

STUBB (frightened by this) What ?

FAWCETT (shrieking) Dog, Dog --- you can't die ! Dog !

A long silence. He stands there trembling.

STUBB (quietly) Maybe that's how the boys at Gillis's Grave died. Just --- sat and died --- (Looking round) Per'aps we're dead ! It's too quiet, Fawcett --- not a husky --- or a bird !

They listen, quaking.

FAWCETT (looking towards the window and whispering) Gabriel! Gabriel !

STUBB (nudging FAWCETT) Take his pulse !

FAWCETT (drawing back) Not me !

STUBB You must have done the last offices --- to the dead!

FAWCETT (his teeth chattering) I --- !

STUBB Was you a cockroach ?

FAWCETT Yes --- I --- I --- !

STUBB (threateningly) Was you ?

FAWCETT I --- I --- think so ---

STUBB You're bushed !

FAWCETT Put a glass under his nose --- I done that to --- to --- Bailly !

STUBB quickly rummages about in his pocket, and finds a broken piece of mirror. He puts it under DOG's nose.

(Whispering) Careful, Stubb --- the last offices has got to be careful !

STUBB studies the mirror for some time, afraid to get too close.

STUBB He's --- dead !

FAWCETT Christ !

STUBB (jumping back) DOG ! DOG !

FAWCETT (also shouting) Dog !

DOG is motionless.

STUBB He's spoofin' --- I reckon !

FAWCETT That's it ! He was holding his breath ! (A pause) Do you think so ?

STUBB I think he's --- not dead.

FAWCETT (smiling) Well, thank God, then ! You see, Stubb, I think he needs us --- I --- ! (He promptly goes and sits down beside DOG in a confidential way) I did resent your power, Dog. I never wanted you elected ! You didn't deserve that prison-sentence on the Gold Coast ! You see, the Governor and me resented the way you spoke the language, we couldn't speak it, you see. We tried to learn from the text-books but it didn't work --- we was jealous of your way with the natives ! You didn't kill that little Ashanti boy, did you ? He keeps you good !

STUBB (bending down and speaking softly) You said you was going to lead us to a place, Dog --- remember ? Three years ago ? When we laid the bet ? (A pause, then to FAWCETT) Is he breathing ?

FAWCETT Oh, he 's breathing !

STUBB (again to DOG) You said we need five years of silence, remember ?

FAWCETT (with sudden disillusion) We should never have come up ! We should never have signed on ! (Shouting at DOG again) Dog ! Dog ! Wake up ! (Shaking DOG violently) Dog !

DOG remains still, slumped on the ammunition chest.

STUBB (shouting in DOG's ear) You ditched us, you rat ! Now wake up !

He also shakes DOG violently. As he does so he hears something clink in DOG's pocket. He stops.

3

Confessions

FAWCETT — What's that ?

STUBB seizes a little bunch of keys and holds them up before him.

STUBB — The gunshot keys !

FAWCETT — (radiantly) We'll shoot our way across the valley --- we'll --- !

With sudden resolve they both have DOG off the ammunition chest --- a tremendous effort --- and leave him slumped against one of the other chests.

STUBB — (unlocking the chest) Hey, look at this !

FAWCETT — Bottles !

They stare inside the chest.

STUBB — Where's the gunshot ?

FAWCETT — It's rye ! Bottles of rye !

STUBB seizes a bottle and tears the top off, then drinks thirstily.

STUBB — (gasping) God save the King !

FAWCETT — (cackling) A couple of sips and you always say that ! (Also seizing a bottle and drinking) Sing your prohibition song !

STUBB — (with great relish, an enormous smile on his face)
Four and twenty Yankees, feeling very dry,
Went across the border to get a drink of rye,
When the rye was opened, the Yanks began to sing.

BOTH — God bless America but God save the King !

FAWCETT — (peeping at DOG) What's he ever done except feed us on lies ? 'Mrs. Dave's over there !' (To DOG, defiantly) Mrs. Dave don't exist ! And last year it was Young Dave coming up with a contract from Prince George to make us rich ! The year before that there was radium in the valley ! Then he was on the run --- every time a bear sniffed round the cache he said, 'That's the cops !'

STUBB — Shall I tell you something about Dog ? (After peeping at DOG) Long Martin told me -- four years

STUBB (cont'd) ago. He --- went native with the Indians. (Peeping cautiously at DOG again) Ate moose-meat with his hands, had the lice picked out of his hair. Lived in their stink and liked it. He --- he --- (lowering his voice) came to my door in South London and said, 'I hear you've bin getting violent with the wife ?' 'The wife ?' I says. And the tears started pouring down my face ! He took me down the station and I told him about -- Fawcett ---- and he said ---

FAWCETT Uccch !

STUBB (in an imploring way) What did you do it for, mate?

FAWCETT (drinking) Well --- (forcing himself to say something) It was --- the village --- the women with all their desires --- such loud desires, I always used to say ! The village in Wales !

STUBB It was South London !

FAWCETT South Wales !

STUBB London !

FAWCETT Wales !

STUBB (giving in) All right, then. Fawcett --- tell me aout her ---

FAWCETT Who ?

STUBB My wife ---

FAWCETT Well --- I used to come in ---

STUBB Yes !

FAWCETT Knock at the door --- start walking up the stairs--!

STUBB (fascinated) Yes !

FAWCETT She'd say, let me have your cassock for the cleaners, I'll come and get it --- and she --- !

STUBB Go on !

FAWCETT (suddenly rejecting the fantasy) To hell with it ! (Shaking STUBB out of his fascinated state) Don't you realise ---~~he'll have us bushed~~ ? We'll go ~~bushed~~ ! (Looking at DOG) Look what he's come to now ! Mad.

STUBB — Just to think, I used to go out of a morning at five o'clock sharp and walk down the road to the tram, and they used to call me Mr. Stubb. And Joe at the works. Or Joseph. The boss called me Joseph. (A pause) And I went on the boose every Friday night, regular. I never got rough but she couldn't stick it after near on fifteen years. (Disconsolately) 'You're not fit to live in a street,' she said. 'You're --- you're --- ashamed of it,' she said.

FAWCETT — Ashamed of what ?

STUBB — --- It. (In total disillusion) There never was a lodger. I wanted her to. But she said no.

FAWCETT — (with the same disconsolate air) I never did take orders. I was only in the choir. And I --- liked the girls --- That's all.

STUBB — (turning to DOG) What do you say to that, Dog ? What do you say to a drop of truth ?

FAWCETT — (whispering) Let's go down, Stubb !

STUBB — (rising with a nod but still looking at DOG) You never could bear to hear the truth about yourself, could you, mate ? Well, you'll get it now, all on your own. You'll get your silence.

They begin to pack stealthily, with glances at DOG.

FAWCETT — Women ! Think of it !

STUBB — And people talking sane !

FAWCETT — We'll get to Dave's before nightfall --- tell him Dog's asleep !

STUBB — For ever !

They continue packing busily.

FAWCETT — Hey --- what about gunshot ?

STUBB — Sssh ! (Glancing at DOG) We don't need shot --- not in daylight !

They hitch on their packs. As they do so a dog barks on the other side of the valley.

4

Dog. cha

FAWCETT (whispering) Dave's huskies !

Their own huskies answer, close by. They wait, fearful that DOG will be disturbed.

STUBB (whispering) Come on !

They creep out, with a last glance at DOG.

DOG is alone. The huskies bark again near by. Then there is silence.

DOG is quite motionless as before.

Suddenly there is a shot. It is followed by another, then another, until there is a volley.

The dogs begin to bark frantically.

DOG shakes himself awake.

DOG (looking round with a glare) Gone !

He jumps up with a tremendous bound and stands with his feet astride like a great animal, glowering.

The firing dies down.

So that's it !

He sees the open ammunition chest, tears out a bottle, then another; gazes at them, and puts them back. He sees the half-empty bottle they have left behind them, seizes it, holds it up to the light, and puts it down again.

Gone !

He begins to calm down, picks up his gun, which they have left lying on the ground; leans it against the bed carefully, closes the chest with a violent kick and sits down on it again.

(To himself) And I used to sweep the gravel at the Governor's lodge --- look at me now ! (Takes a drink from the used bottls) You liar ! (Pauses) Yes, old King Prempel painted the walls of his palace with human blood ! Gallons of it ! But the English broke him. They turned him into a

5

Isolation.

Dog. assume control of truth.

DOG (cont'd) citizen. (With a smile) Like me. They exiled him to an island in the Indian Ocean, and when he came back he was talking about public works.

He frowns as if trying to recollect something.

(With an effort) I could never bear to touch --- a woman !

He seems astonished at his own words and looks round to see if there are hearers.

(Looking up as if answering someone) What's that --- I don't like the truth ! There's the truth ! And I hope it chokes you ! They stoned me -- (almost weeping) hissed at me ! A poor damned white ! (After recollection) Liar. (Looks up at the sky and whispers) Gabriel !

Silence. He nods in a resigned way. He gazes before him in the silence, quite lost in memories, it seems.

There is a movement close by and he seizes his gun.

Who's there ? (He waits, breathing heavily, his gun pointed) Who's there ?

STUBB and FAWCETT appear again. They walk in cautiously. DOG lowers his gun. They appear shaken. DOG watches them closely as they put down their packs and guns.

DOG How far d'you get ?

STUBB Edge of the lake.

DOG Then ?

STUBB We saw Young Dave.

DOG You did ?

They nod silently.

What did he say ?

STUBB He --- he --- laughed at us --- He just stood there and laughed --- The tears was pouring down his face.

STUBB (cont'd) He was holding his sides. He couldn't help it. He's a decent kid. He just couldn't help laughing.

DOG (gritting his teeth) I'll give him laugh !

They sit down again and stare before them in silence.

FAWCETT Why did he laugh, Dog ?

DOG Because you're unfit for civilisation ! Because you're a couple of scarecrows. You're finished --- you can't go down to reality any more. That's why.

FAWCETT They'd have drummed us out of Pas if we'd gone down !

STUBB He just stood and laughed. He couldn't get his breath --- he doubled up ! And you couldn't blame him !

FAWCETT (to DOG) They'd laugh at you, too !

DOG (with sudden fury) I wouldn't try to go down ! I wouldn't try it ! Get that into your nut !

A pause.

STUBB (pleasantly) It's nice to hear your voice again, Dog ---

DOG (still to FAWCETT) 'Women' ! Look at yourself in a mirror, Casanova !

FAWCETT strokes his chin in a self-conscious way.

FAWCETT We need your help, Dog. Perhaps you could choke Young Dave off for us ! - over the radio. Tell his dad !

DOG Like hell I could. You want the truth --- you got it ! Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings -- ! And I'll tell you something else --- while you was out butterfly-hunting I talked the truth to myself --- it's getting quite a habit round here ! Truth's a two-way traffic !

STUBB [illegible] too, Dog --- while you was asleep.

DOG [illegible]at did you talk ?

STUBB We [illegible] We talked, [illegible] when

(b)

No ammunition

DOG — No, just tell me, in the same words ! Go ahead !

STUBB — I --- ! (Glancing at FAWCETT for help)

FAWCETT — I said I was only --- in the cloth --- !

DOG — Yes ?

FAWCETT — I said I was --- ! (He can't go on)

DOG — And that was the truth ?

FAWCETT — That's it !

DOG — (with relentless mockery) I'm fascinated !

STUBB — I told Fawcett about the --- I said she always said --- 'You're not meant --- ' I said --- About --- fifteen years --- I --- (He gives up)

DOG — (nodding) Quite a confession, eh ? And you had some rye ?

STUBB — That's right.

DOG — 'Four and twenty Yankees' ?

STUBB nods.

GOD SAVE THE KING ! (Imitating STUBB)

DOG finishes off with FAWCETT's cackle, and the other two look away, shamefaced.

FAWCETT — (with sudden spirit, lighting up) And what was your truth ?

DOG — (momentarily off-guard) My own ! (Pointing to the sky) For God !

STUBB — (flinging his keys at him) You can have your rye-keys !

DOG — Thanks.

They glower at each other.

STUBB — Dog.

DOG — Yes ?

STUBB — Young Dave had some mail. A whole wad of it. Sticking out of his pack.

DOG — A wad of it ?

STUBB — That's right !

DOG — So where is he now ?

STUBB — I don't know --- We just ran !

DOG — Oh, you did ! Heroes !

FAWCETT — It seemed like trapper's mail for a couple or three years !

DOG — We'll just have to wait, then --- unless you scared him off for good !

STUBB — I reckon all that shooting was just Young Dave coming over with the mail !

DOG — You did ? Realist ! (INSERT)

STUBB — And Dog --- we talked it over --- (pointing at the ammunition chest) We thought it was funny --- there's a lot of bottles there !

DOG — And you thought you'd find gunshot ?

STUBB — That's right ! It seemed a lot of bottles --- for an ammunition chest ! (Trying to kid)

DOG — Don't you like rye ?

STUBB — But that's a year's supply --- !

FAWCETT — Dog --- where's that gunshot ?

DOG — ~~Here~~ --- right ~~under~~ Thank ~~me~~ --- ~~er~~ --- ! (He smiles defiantly)

FAWCETT — You mean --- ? (He gives an alarmed glance at STUBB) You traded the pelts for --- ! You traded all those pelts --- ?

STUBB — (staring at DOG) You did what ?

FAWCETT — There's no gunshot ! Oh, Christ in heaven ! How are we going to live --- eat --- ? God help us, Dog, that's all !

DOG — That's the idea --- for God to help you -- if he wants to !

FAWCETT — ~~You're bushed~~ !

STUBB — He's spoofin' ! Like the Eskimo trance ! (Laughing)

DOG luahgs with him ironically, and they both suddenly stop.

STUBB — (leaping at him) You rat !

DOG pushes him off with a kick.

FAWCETT — Suppose a grizzly comes prowling round - suppose one of the huskies goes wild --- ?

STUBB — ~~You're hushed, hushed~~ !

DOG — (mildly) I can talk to huskies, you know that. And grizzlies never come near me.

STUBB — They might come near us !

DOG — Then put your faith in God, like I do !

FAWCETT — There's my ten-foot rod --- just that --- between us and starvation !

STUBB — 'God,' he says ! 'God' !

DOG — It's funny --- (quietly) I don't know why I did it. I just had to. I radio-ed to Dave, 'Give me rye this time. It'll help us dream' !

FAWCETT — And there was me cleaning the guns ---

STUBB — Well, we're stuck now.

DOG — Why stuck ! Go on down ! Like you started doing !

STUBB — Suppose we meet a grizzly ?

DOG — It's laughter you're afraid of ! Gunshot won't keep you from that !

STUBB — And Dave allows it ? How are we to shoot strangers ?

DOG — Well, maybe (with a broad smile) I could lay my hands on a few rounds, for purposes of murder. That's something we can all rise to.

FAWCETT — Dave didn't say a word ? He just let you ?

DOG — Wouldn't you have let me --- with all those pelts, and a ten-foot fishing rod ?

FAWCETT — What --- a --- ? Dog ! Dog ! (Frantically, almost in tears) My rod --- my rod --- !

(19)

Back into the past.

Conflict, - Big confession

He dashes to his bed in search of his rod.

STUBB — You're bushed !

DOG — Leave gunshot for the people downstairs, Stubb --- you're a mild man --- (Laughing)

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) He's done it ! He's stolen my rod !

He seizes his gun and points it at Dog.

DOG — (quietly) Shoot me ! I like being shot --- it's my weakness !

FAWCETT pulls the trigger and there is only a click.

FAWCETT — (flinging the gun away) I'm going down --- I'll get there tonight if it kills me ! (Picks up his pack again) Come on, Stubb !

STUBB doesn't move.

DOG — He's scared of grizzlies.

FAWCETT — Stubb !

STUBB doesn't move.

FAWCETT — (to STUBB) How are we going to live, then ?

STUBB only shrugs indifferently.

DOG — (to STUBB) Remember when we got your love-letter near on two years ago ? And we laced ourselves with rye all night, and sat round a fire and listened to the sound of the trees and watched the sun come up? And you wouldn't read your letter --- the only letter we ever got --- the only time Dave's red flag went up !

STUBB — That's your idea, too ! --- the red flag. When we've got a radio !

DOG — But we'll read our letters this time --- and drink ourselves round the clock ! (To FAWCETT) Now, come on, sit down --- Let's talk the truth! It makes me feel good.

FAWCETT — (taking off his pack again and shaking his head) ~~You're bushed, Dog --- You're bushed and God knows where it's going to end !~~

X ~~DL~~ into Dog.

X. DL.

DOG — What did she write a love-letter for, Stubb, if she's having a joy-ride on the lodger every night ?

STUBB — (hanging his head) The lodger don't exist ---

DOG — Ah ! (To FAWCETT) Is that what I missed ?

FAWCETT — You was awake ! (Scoffing) Eskimo trance !

STUBB — (continuing in same vein) She wants me back. She loves me.

DOG — (holding out the bottle to him) Here --- wash the truth down !

STUBB — (with subdued ferocity) What about <u>your</u> truth ?

DOG — Oh, that'll come in time ! (Suddenly to FAWCETT) Expecting mail ?

FAWCETT — No !

DOG — I thought you wanted to talk <u>reality</u> ?

FAWCETT — There --- you was awake --- I said so !

DOG — I was more awake than I've ever been before --- now who's that letter from ?

FAWCETT — (wincing under his glare) Well --- I always expected my old mum and dad to write.

DOG — Didn't they ever ?

FAWCETT — Back in Vancouver they did. They hate me.

DOG — Why ?

FAWCETT — They think I'm rich ! They think I'm down in Vancouver with a cheroot in my mouth, living in the whorehouse, my feet up ! I used to send them a postcard every year --- to keep 'em happy --- a hotel --- a nice garden --- something <u>de luxe</u>. So they think I'm rich ! They think, 'He doesn't give us a cent ! And he's rich like that !'

DOG — (slyly) Not even as a cockroach wasn't you rich, Fawcett ?

FAWCETT — I --- (He stares sadly before him)

DOG — I --- ?

S N - L. Chan

FAWCETT I wasn't in the cloth.

DOG There !

FAWCETT They wanted me to, badly. First the choir, then a course in theology --- !

He breaks off, waiting for DOG's next question.

DOG 'They,' Fawcett ? Who's 'they' ?

FAWCETT Well --- !

DOG Your mum and dad ?

FAWCETT (at the dead bottom of his morale) I haven't got no mum and dad.

DOG (soothingly) You are rich in a way, Fawcett. You live in one of God's loveliest hotel-gardens -- !

FAWCETT (looking round him) I feel cold !

DOG (with a pleasant chuckle) It's as hot as you'll ever get it this latitude !

STUBB (quietly, eyeing DOG) Now it's your turn.

FAWCETT (excitedly) Are you expecting mail, Dog ?

DOG P'raps. P'raps I am !

FAWCETT An arrest ?

DOG No. Only tax evasion. That's from Winnipeg. From the old prospecting days. And a police-summons from Mackenzie Bay --- drunk and disorderly. A guy from Eskimo Point owes me three hundred dollars. He might be writing to apologise. He did once or twice, down at Pas. Very serious letters. That's all.

Silence.

STUBB What about the murder charge ?

DOG (blinking rapidly) Murder charge ?

FAWCETT Is your name clear, Dog ?

DOG (screwing up his eyes) I think so, yes.

8

Going down

Do you know truth
or other 2

STUBB Was you ever in Kamasi ?

DOG (after a long pause, hanging his head so that his eyes aren't seen) No.

STUBB What's your name ?

DOG shakes his head dumbly.

FAWCETT (encouragingly) But, Dog --- if there's no price on your head, we can go down --- we're free --- you can lead us down --- you know how ?

DOG (in a murmur) You'd be laughed at just the same.

STUBB P'raps not with you !

DOG ~~(pulling at his own beard impetuously) Look~~ at this !

STUBB That's ~~--- a good~~ beard !

DOG ~~You don't see 'em any more ! Not this big !~~ And ~~what's~~ your destination ?

FAWCETT Fort St. John --- Prince George ! — Barkerville

DOG And Amy's whorehouse ?

FAWCETT That's right !

DOG Where we sat and laid the bet ?

FAWCETT (enthusiastically) Yes !

DOG The 'truth' ! They want the truth !

A doubtful pause.

STUBB ~~Where else, then ? Amy's still there !~~

DOG You're thinking of the construction days, Stubb !

STUBB What's that ?

DOG 'What's that ?' You wasn't alive in construction days, that's what ! Fort St. John --- Prince George --- Amy's whorehouse --- they don't exist ! That's what !

FAWCETT ~~Fort St.~~ John don't exist ?

DOG — Not your Fort St. John ! I know a railroad track, some hotels, a Board of Trade, some churches, stores ---

FAWCETT — What about that ?

STUBB — I --- can't remember !

DOG — How do you talk the truth if you can't remember what's true !

STUBB — There's Amy's saloon ---

DOG — The Port Douglas Hotel ! They don't even call it saloon any more !

FAWCETT — And Barkerville ---

DOG — 'Barkerville' !

STUBB — Kelly's Hotel --- Remember the tailings along Williams Creek ? I reckon they turned that gravel over a thousand times --- polished and bright ! That's it !

DOG — (mocking) 'That's it !'

FAWCETT — Barker took six hundred thousand dollars in gold, so they say ---

DOG — 'And laid the seed of British Columbia !'

FAWCETT — That's it !

STUBB — Richfield --- Walker's Gulch --- Nuggets as big as your hand --- Antler Creek --- Low Hee ---

DOG — (taking up the recital) Conklins Gulch --- Remember the Roger's Restaurant --- the tin shop---?

STUBB — That's it !

DOG — The Occidental Hotel --- The Brewery Saloon ?

STUBB — Yes !

DOG — You remember pictures ! You remember dreams, Stubb! A hundred years ago ! But I thought you was after the truth now ?

FAWCETT — (with his startled look) What's the truth ?

DOG — This --- Barkerville's a museum-piece from the goldrush days ! It's a dream that brought you to Canada --- that's what ! Amy's whorehouse don't exist ! You laid a bet in the backroom of the Fort Douglas Hotel, drinking rye ~~! With businessmen all~~ round ! White collars ! Christian ~~mission~~ workers! Train time-tables ! ~~A feller from~~ the civil air-lines ! ~~A couple of~~ schoolmarms drinking port and ~~lemon ! That's what ! (Chuckling to himself)~~ And Amy used to clean out your room, you lice ! No shooting, no cursing --- ! No Flaming Ethel !

FAWCETT — (starting up) Flaming Ethel, she --- !

STUBB — She --- !

They both stop.

DOG — She existed all right --- before you was born --- ~~'with the most miniaturest little revolver you've~~ ever seen in her stocking' ---

STUBB — I've seen her ---

DOG — That was a piece from the north of England out here on a dream like you ! You only called her Flaming Ethel !

FAWCETT — Because she had red hair !

DOG — That's right ! And they took her away for disinfestation ! Then they put her on mission-work among the Indians. Stubb --- they go prospecting in helicopters nowadays !

STUBB — You don't see helicopters round here !

DOG — What would they want round here --- sit and watch ~~you going bushed ?~~

FAWCETT — (bitterly) What about the great white bear --- the two years' fast at Carlyle Street, Winnipeg ? Tell me that's not a dream !

DOG — (quietly) You take your choice, Fawcett.

FAWCETT — ~~And the Torngarsoak !~~

There is silence.

STUBB — ~~What could we do down below, Dog ?~~

DOG (grimly) Hang yourself in a white collar ! You wanted it wild when you came up here and you've got it !

STUBB Long Martin was wild all right --- we staked our claims north of the Ingenika River --- high-grade ore ---

DOG But you went north by train. And Long Martin got back to Vancouver by military plane !

FAWCETT What are you trying to prove ?

DOG ~~That the construction days are over~~ ! If you want to go down, go down! --- but there's just streets. Streets. Town councils --- sewage plans --- prostitution laws --- wives to hook you --- politics --- newspapers ! (Fixing FAWCETT with his eyes) Don't you remember ?

FAWCETT (awkwardly) You've got to sign certificates --- special licences --- that kind of thing ?

DOG That kind of thing, yes ! ~~You're on the wrong side~~ of the ~~law up here, Fawcett~~ ! Shall I tell you why ? ~~--- because you're free~~

FAWCETT nods gravely.

FAWCETT Perhaps those three fellers ~~at Gillis's Grave~~ got caught by a squall --- like you get on the lake --- the sky goes black before you can turn the boat round ---

DOG They weren't in a boat !

FAWCETT I thought you said -- ! (He stops)

STUBB (eagerly) Dog --- is that Peace River plan still on?

DOG ~~Sure !~~

STUBB A fur farm --- lynx --- fishers --- some silvers --- some black fox ---

DOG (still watching FAWCETT) You're breaking the law all the time, Fawcett. You go stalking in June ! Did you know that was outside the moose-season ?

FAWCETT No.

DOG ~~Can you tell me when the moose-season starts~~ ?

9

The silence
returns to dreams.

FAWCETT — No.

DOG — After how many years ? (With disgust) September 15th !

FAWCETT — I reckon if a fat moose walks into your territory he wants to be eaten ! (With his cackling laugh) ~~In or out of season !~~

DOG — (watching the other two in silence) Why do you two follow me --- first for dreams, then for truth?

STUBB — (looking up at the sky and shivering) It seems to be blowing up cold !

FAWCETT — (startled) That's what I thought ! You never know what weather you're going to get. Remember that day it stayed dark till two in the afternoon ?

DOG — (cynically) It was dark because you was dead asleep --- !

FAWCETT — (indignantly) We moved around with lamps --- !

DOG — (beyond his tether) What about it ? What's the good of remembering ?

STUBB — (quietly) I don't like it full moon. It seems --- dangerous --- The towers seem to move !

DOG — What towers ?

STUBB — They --- !

FAWCETT — (frantic) Shut up !

FAWCETT sits there shivering. The others seem unaware of this cold.

DOG — (pleasantly) Listen to that silence. You can't break a silence like that. Do you notice, the animals never try ? They squawk and bellow but the noises just sink in.

STUBB nods vigorously.

FAWCETT — (seeing STUBB's nod) That's right !

DOG — I told the silence a mouthful while you was away. I said I couldn't never bear to --- (For a moment he seems to falter) touch a woman.

STUBB (laughing deliberately) Go on ! Nobody'd say you was a pouf if they'd seen you with Flaming Ethel down at Pas, eh, Fawcett ?

FAWCETT That's right !

STUBB I heard she nearly pulled her pistol on you in the act ! And she said, 'Do you want my blood as well?' Do you want my blood !

DOG (delighted with the bogus memory) That's right !

The atmosphere of make-believe starts again.

FAWCETT That was the time Long Martin jumped over a cubicle and landed on May and a de luxe prospector from Winnipeg ! He was blind that night ! He said the prospector had her knickers and high-heeled shoes on and she was painting him red !

DOG (chuckling) With her rouge-stick !

FAWCETT They used to charge all-night prices there ! Rose never would take an all-night customer if she could help it. Remember that ? She said you had to be a wife every time --- and she wasn't that unfaithful, not to change husbands six times a week !

DOG She had a kind of a wit, don't you think so --- Rose ?

FAWCETT She did !

STUBB Remember the guy who used to sit her on his knees for a couple of hours and then go away ? They say he had it shot away in the war.

FAWCETT He was scared, that's all ! He was pale, you remember ? His eyes moved a lot, they seemed to be floating all the time --- very dark, very soft !

STUBB (quietly) You're talking about Long Martin.

FAWCETT Am I ?

STUBB That's how the pimps start. No interest in sex !

FAWCETT I remember --- !

DOG (suddenly) Stop remembering !

Silence.

10

Joy Dawe's truth on.

STUBB ~~(Young Dave's never been this long.)~~

FAWCETT If we're leaving, Dog --- shall I damp the smudge down ?

DOG No, let it stay !

FAWCETT And start a forest fire ? It hasn't rained in two months !

DOG (angrily) It's all right, I tell you --- it's dying every minute, just the same !

The radio begins blinking again, S.O.S.

FAWCETT (to STUBB) What's the matter with him ?

STUBB (seeing the radio) There's a signal, Dog.

DOG You'll get your signals soon enough !

FAWCETT (approaching the radio) I'll answer it.

DOG (bellowing) Leave it alone ! (Murmuring to himself) Long Martin --- (To STUBB) Perhaps you'd like to go into partnership with him again --- when we go down ?

STUBB Pimping ?

DOG In the mail-order racket ! He took a room six foot by ten in a seven-storey house in Bridge Street, Vancouver --- he rubbed blanco in his collar to get it white --- and he sent out envelopes --- he --- ! (Stopping) You're looking so sad !

FAWCETT (quietly, as if to protect STUBB) Long Martin has a couple of the brightest whorehouses in the North West Territories, isn't that right ?

DOG Like hell he has ! He never even had a secretary ! And he said to you (to STUBB), if your memory stretches back that far, he said, 'Come in with me, we'll advertise our pelts in the small-ads column in the Vancouver Times, we'll give a mail-order number, and we'll send 'em bad pelts for cut prices!' What a hero ! And he went round all the stations from Mackenzie Bay to Eskimo Point picking up bad pelts ! And the business caught like a forest fire! It went from bad to better, and from better to low-down crooked, and now he's a rich man ! And you was his white-collared worker --- you wiped his business clean every day !

STUBB (hanging his head) Doesn't sound like Long Martin to me !

DOG Not the Long Martin you've been cooking up for yourself for three years !

The radio-signal ceases.

FAWCETT I always heard he's got the fattest whores in Prince George ! It was Dave broke the news --- remember that, Stubb ?

STUBB Do I !

FAWCETT 'He's gone prospecting in petticoats !' --- talk about laugh !

STUBB And the night Long Martin played Flaming Ethel --- they didn't take their eyes off the dice for two whole nights --- and that's where he got the money!

DOG I'll strike a bargain. Tell me the truth about Long Martin and we'll go down --- ~~I'll shave off my beard at Dave's and~~ I'll march you into Pas like a victorious army --- we'll make a fortune on a white-fox farm !

STUBB (radiantly) You promise ?

DOG If you tell the truth ! (Relentlessly) It's got inside me ! O.K. ?

STUBB and FAWCETT glance at each other.

STUBB O.K.

DOG (to FAWCETT) First --- your list of Long Martin's whores --- you remember ?

FAWCETT (eagerly) Yes !

DOG How did you draw it up ?

FAWCETT (in alarm) I --- !

STUBB (impatiently) Tell him !

FAWCETT From --- from the girls in the village --- South Wales --- the --- the fat ones ---

4

Gabriel, 1st.
time in the Act

DOG — Thanks ! And now (to STUBB) I want this one quick --- What's Long Martin's mail-order address ?

STUBB — (with lightning speed) Best Pelts Ltd., 24 Bridge Street, Vancouver.

DOG — Like a puppy ! Good !

STUBB — ~~Now do we go down ?~~

DOG — Without the mail ? We'll wait for that --- then go down.

FAWCETT — (irritated) Mail ---

A long silence.

STUBB — (burying his head in his hands) We'll wait a ~~hundred years !~~

Suddenly there is a shot, ~~quite~~ very close by.

It's him.

They all listen.

FAWCETT — What's he shooting his way up for ?

DOG — (laughing) He's blazing a trail for your mum and dad's letters !

STUBB — (with sudden resolve) I don't want letters !

FAWCETT — (jumping up at once) Nor me !

STUBB — (also jumping up) Let's go !

DOG — (alarmed) You'll stay here !

They stop in the act of picking up their packs.

STUBB — (to FAWCETT) He's scared !

DOG — (abashed) We'll go down together. I'm leading you --- is that right ? Who else can fix it up with Dave ? You're on contract, remember !

STUBB — (seeing a bargaining point) Well, it's got to be quick !

DOG — He's nearly here ! Can't you tell by the shot ? He's down by the Creek ! Now take it easy ---

DOG (cont'd) Easy --- What about another bottle of --- (laughing with an effort) gunshot ? Eh ?

He jumps up and opens the chest, pulls out another bottle while the other two watch him suspiciously.

FAWCETT ~~It's been a long time.~~

STUBB Eh ?

FAWCETT Three years !

DOG ~~(handing them the bottle after opening it)~~ Here !

STUBB No.

FAWCETT (also shaking his head) It disagrees with me. (Suddenly getting an idea) Perhaps they died of a jag --- !

DOG Who ?

FAWCETT The fellers at Gillis's Grave ! Suppose they drank all night --- the mail comes up the night before --- they went out stalking and just --- sat there and died --- of boose ---

DOG nods with a kind of disgust as he puts the untouched bottle on the table.

STUBB (to DOG) Was the letters read ?

DOG I don't know !

STUBB I mean, was they opened ?

DOG (impatiently) The rats ate 'em up, so how do I know ?

Another shot, even closer.

There ! What did I say ?

They look in the direction of the shot, run to the door.

FAWCETT (calling out) Is that you, Young Dave ?

They wait but there is silence.

STUBB — You there, Dave ?

DOG — (sharply, his voice much stronger than the others) Gabriel !

The others gape at him.

STUBB — Listen to that, 'Gabriel' !

FAWCETT — (suddenly turning on DOG) It was you got us up here ! 'Gabriel,' 'Gabriel' ! Who you calling to --- who you been calling to for three years, for Christ's sake ? (Screaming at the top of his voice) You big, fat, two-faced, bearded pouf ! I'm going, down, do you hear that ? I'm going down to civilisation !

DOG — (also shouting) There ain't no civilisation --- it don't exist ! It's make-believe, you cockroach ! They're all the same as us down there !

FAWCETT — For a bet ! You'd been on a jag and the town looked dead, so you laid a bet --- Something's got to come out of the silence,' you said. Like hell it did ! Like hell !

STUBB — (quietly) It was you said that, mate.

FAWCETT — (turning on him also) Said what ?

STUBB — About the silence. Down at Pas.

FAWCETT — (staring at him) Me ?

STUBB — That's right ! You'd just been offered a job on road-haulage and it scared the shit out of you ! So you came up here !

FAWCEET — Dog was offered the job !

STUBB — Dog was working in the municipal --- !

DOG — (going for him) Now, then, you rat --- !

STUBB — (jumping away) In the municipal office --- (speaking quickly) sewage department --- checking up on the road menders --- ten dollars a week !

He stands there panting with the effort and they all seem to share the exhaustion.

DOG suddenly dashes to the bottle, picks it up and takes a long draught.

DOG — (gasping) It's the memory that goes --- they say it's the first thing --- there's too much silence !

STUBB — You remember all right !

DOG — I feel cold --- (shivering) dead cold !

FAWCETT — That's what I said just now ! And you said it's as hot as you'll ever get this latitude !

DOG — (sitting down on the chest again, hugging himself up) Got the fire laid for tonight ?

FAWCETT — We're going, you said !

STUBB — We're in a fix if we don't go down --- without gunshot !

FAWCETT — That's right ! (To DOG) What do we eat ? The beans'll be out by the end of the week, the moosemeat's nearly gone ! (Bending down and talking to him fiercely) That's like you, isn't it --- letting us starve to death like the boys at Gillis's Grave, by Manson Creek --- there's the creek just below --- do you want us to do the same --- ?

DOG — (bursting out angrily but still shivering) To hell with your stories ! 'Manson Creek' --- 'Gillis's Grave' --- how long are you going to cling to that one ?

FAWCETT — It's your story --- the rusty frying pan, the letters nailed to the table eaten by rats --- that's yours !

DOG — And you believe it ! You put your own lying stories in my mouth and then say they're true !

FAWCETT — (gasping) I --- !

STUBB — It's true all right --- I heard it from a guy at Coldwater Creek --- stories about death are always true !

DOG — (fiercely) I'll cast you two in the truth and leave you stinking of it --- like men in a bog ! (He goes very quiet) They'll never let us back. Get that in your nuts.

They both stare at him.

12

Actual reality.

13

STUBB (in a whisper) What's that ?

A hush falls on them. FAWCETT casts his eyes round in the silence.

DOG (also whispering) Remember what Dave said three years ago ? 'I'm looking for guys who've given up.' And he shot me a wink. 'Like you,' he said.

STUBB (trembling) Hey, does that Young Dave wear a fall-out suit ? He seemed to --- !

FAWCETT (shrieking) Shut up ! Shut up ! (A pause) How'd they give us superannuation if we wasn't going back?

DOG (still quietly, gazing at him) To lead you on. 'Keep yourselves amused up there,' he says. Remember ? 'I'll teach you how to trap, stretch the pelts. Take a gun apiece. A fishing rod. I'll give you a pack of huskies.' Remember ?

FAWCETT (bowed) No.

DOG 'All you got to do,' he says, 'is answer the radio four times a day, keep the grass round the station trimmed, patrol once an hour and --- keep your rotten mouths shut !' Remember ?

STUBB (terrified, with a gesture towards the door) ~~What's under the concrete~~ ? ~~--- them towers~~ --- ?

DOG ~~He didn't say.~~

STUBB What did you sign on for, Dog ?

DOG We all did.

The hush continues.

FAWCETT (suddenly) I'll go down tonight if it kills me, I'll make Dave's cabin and kip there the night, I'll go alone, so help me God !

DOG God'll help you all right if you can help yourself --- but be careful of that silence on your way over, that's all, Fawcett --- mind you don't get wobbly knees !

FAWCETT You come with me, Stubb --- the silence makes me giddy --- I have to start shouting --- they'll pick me up for crazy --- let's go down, Stubb !

DOG — We only feed each other with dreams ! Alone we're real ! Go ahead --- go down --- we'll all go down alone !

STUBB — Are you bushed?! We've got no gunshot ! I can't talk to huskies --- by Christ (to FAWCETT) He's leaving us, Fawcett --- ! He's --- !

DOG, suddenly seeing his advantage, seizes his pack and makes as if to leave.

STUBB — He's doing it, Fawcett --- ! Dog, Dog, come back --- we can't handle the huskies --- Dog, Dog !

DOG — (stopping) What do you want me for ? I'm not gunshot !

STUBB — (exhausted) We just need you.

FAWCETT — (surrendering) You're --- in with the silence, Dog. You seem to know about it.

DOG — (throwing down his pack with a glad gesture) All right !

FAWCETT — Thank Christ !

DOG — Anyway, maybe he's dead --- moved to another town --- another --- civilisation !

STUBB — Who's 'he' ?

DOG — Long Martin.

FAWCETT — The petticoat-dealer !

DOG — (turning on him fiercely) And you --- what'll you live on ? Going back to lavatory-attendant in Vancouver ?

FAWCETT — (stunned) Dog ---

DOG — (relentlessly) Maybe the hole you drilled through to the ladies' lavatory is still there !

FAWCETT — (staring before him) It was Wales ---

DOG — You didn't stir out of British Columbia till you was turned twenty-three ! And Christ knows who gave birth to you !

STUBB ~~(laughing suddenly) A tap --- a Fawcett !~~

DOG (with disgust) Grin your bloody head off !

A shot, close by. They jump.

FAWCETT They should take that gun out of his hands ! He's ~~trigger-happy !~~

STUBB (to DOG) And what about you --- what'll you go back to ?

DOG I --- !

STUBB (continuing) He comes out to do the big prospecting job --- sails from Southampton in a de luxe liner carrying coal --- and they give him a job at the Town Hall in Winnipeg ! A job listening to the assistant sewage-officer talking big about Eskimos and the king of Kumasi who painted the walls of his palace with human blood !

DOG (quietly) You look ugly when you say that.

STUBB I feel sick, more likely !

DOG That's digust at yourself !

They glare at each other.

FAWCETT I just feel dead --- the air feels dead , do you know what I mean ? I can't smell the pine-firs any more (he sniffs) --- just about now you can smell the lake, usually --- when the wind changes, as the sun starts its downward course, ~~as the guy down at Pas used to say~~ ---

The other two continue to glare at each other.

DOG (still to STUBB) Why don't you finish it ? How he took a wife --- ?

STUBB I was leaving it to you !

DOG And couldn't do it --- got half-way and couldn't do it --- ?

STUBB (sorry now) Well, you don't have to blame yourself ---

Silence.

FAWCETT — There don't seem a reason for doing anything; (Pointing at the bottle) Even the rye --- it's just liquid: Eh, Stubb ?

DOG — (in a dried-up, sunken voice) We'll leave. I'll tear up the contract with my own hands !

STUBB — (in a whisper) Leave, now, Dog ?

DOG — Yes.

FAWCETT — We won't wait for the mail ?

DOG — ~~No.~~

STUBB and FAWCETT reach out for their packs, watching DOG for a move.

STUBB — ~~What do we do with the rye, Dog ?~~

DOG — (in the same voice as before) Lock it up.

STUBB — We lock the cabin ?

DOG — What's that ?

STUBB — We close the cabin up ?

DOG — No, leave it open for the boy. (Strangely) He's young and green ...

FAWCETT — (as STUBB takes up his gun) What's the use of guns without shot ?

STUBB — (strapping up his pack) They're weapons just the same.

~~DOG watches them listlessly as~~ they prepare their packs again.

No Arg.

DOG — ~~Don't forget the frying pan. We'll need to cook !~~

STUBB — (turning) What's that ?

DOG — The frying pan.

STUBB — ~~Oh ! The frying pan, Fawcett !~~

FAWCETT nods and absently takes it down and begins strapping it to the back of his pack.

STUBB (hastily) We'll hit the other side of the valley by nightfall --- there's light enough --- !

DOG ~~He'll be there --- with his polished white collar!~~ Remember that !

STUBB ~~I don't have to see him !~~

DOG I heard of a man once, he filled in seventy thousand, nine hundred and forty-two envelopes !

FAWCETT (turning) That was Stubb !

STUBB (stopping his preparations) I used to hate that wall --- more than anything --- it was dirty yellow --- and the way Long Martin used to cough --- every day, every hour of the day --- (he imitates a terrible dry cough) the way he used to put his finger round the inside of his collar on the hot days --- I had to get out, Dog !

DOG And you're going back to that ?

STUBB (helplessly) I couldn't !

DOG You was talking through your snot about me just now --- in the sewage department --- do you expect me to go back to that ?

There is a shot in the distance.

FAWCETT He's further off !

STUBB Maybe he's lost ! (To DOG) We could answer his shots with ours if you hadn't traded our pelts for rye this morning !

FAWCETT That was yesterday ! We've been two days without gunshot !

STUBB It was this morning --- ! (But he isn't sure)

DOG (to STUBB) I'll tell you why you won't go to Long Martin --- because you owe him close on seven hundred quid !

STUBB ~~What ?~~

FAWCETT You owe Long Martin ~~that,~~ Stubb ?

STUBB (to DOG) ~~When ?~~

DOG ~~The date makes no difference ! A couple of thousand trapping days ago --- a couple of eternities~~ !

STUBB (dazed) Seven hundred ---

DOG (to FAWCETT) That leaves you, lavatory-man --- to go back to your hole in the wall --- alone !

FAWCETT (as if to cover this up) I never heard about Stubb owing any seven hundred quid !

DOG Not about Long Martin waiting down in Pas for him, saying he won't put him in gaol, he'll take him into partnership again --- on half-pay --- for fourteen years, until his balls have shrivelled to the size of peas ! That was Long Martin's own expression !

STUBB What would I need that money for ?

DOG To pay your wife for leaving her in the shit twenty years back --- !

A silence during which FAWCETT gazes at STUBB sympathetically.

STUBB The lodger ---

DOG There was no lodger ! There was Mr. and Mrs. Stubb --- nobody even looked at her in the butcher's every morning !

STUBB I never sent her nothing. No money, only letters !

DOG You left that to Long Martin ! That's what you did ! And it piled up until he had you in a corner where you couldn't move !

STUBB (with sudden decision) I ain't going down !

DOG Like hell you ain't !

They listen again. Nothing.

DOG (in a lower voice) Let's go up, not down !

STUBB (startled) Up ?

DOG We'll find another cabin further up ! Beyond the wire.

FAWCETT (nervously) It's an idea !

STUBB — But --- but --- !

DOG — (with a chuckle) Give me that rye, lavatory-man !

FAWCETT hands him the bottle and DOG takes a drink.

FAWCETT — (looking at him affectionately) You know, you're still our Dog. You always will be. It's something a man's born with.

DOG hands the bottle back to him and FAWCETT closes it again carefully.

STUBB — We'll freeze to death up there !

DOG — It did me good to trade that gunshot ! --- I've always hated guns !

FAWCETT — You could never shoot !

DOG — (indignantly) I used to be a marksman in the war --- at five hundred yards I --- !

STUBB — You wasn't in the war !

FAWCETT — (gazing at the bottle he has just closed) I never used to get real drunk --- even on a week's jag. I always had one eye open --- !

DOG — Like hell you did --- one lavatory-eye !

STUBB — We could go to Dave's --- kip there the night --- see what he says about moving on --- try a town we've never seen before !

FAWCETT — There's lots of towns I wouldn't like to see again !

DOG — Me, too ! Vancouver, Winnipeg --- !

STUBB — Eskimo Point, Prince George, Pas ! The whole damn lot !

A shot, close by again. They jump. They stare at each other in horror.

STUBB — Suppose he's bringing bad news --- !

DOG — Ssssh !

They listen intently.

DOG (in a lowered voice) I don't like the way he's --- moving round --- !

FAWCETT What ?

DOG Suppose it's not one at all ! Suppose it's several!

FAWCETT (frightened) How could that be ?

DOG Suppose they're signalling --- one side of the valley to the other --- closing in ?

STUBB (uncomfortably) ~~You're bushed~~ !

FAWCETT ~~We've got no gunshot~~!

They listen again.

FAWCETT (bursting out) Is there a price on your head or not?

DOG What about him ? (Pointing at STUBB) He's wanted for seven hundred quid ! They'd surround a place for that !

FAWCETT We're wanted for the war maybe --- shirking the war --- !

DOG The war was --- when ? (He stops, perplexed)

STUBB Long Martin's too lazy. And he might be dead ! I tell you, it didn't seem like seven hundred --- more like ---

FAWCETT How much, Stubb ?

STUBB Five quid !

DOG 'Five' ! Five a week for three years !

FAWCETT I never was married, so I can't tell ! (With his startled look)

DOG (burying his head in his hands) ~~I don't want to be~~ with you two any more !

STUBB We can't wait for this mail all night !

They listen again. And again they relax a little in the silence.

FAWCETT (to DOG) The air feels dead up here --- there's nothing moving --- ! ~~(Frightening himself) Maybe~~

S1 T.

(16)

As ~~through~~ looking
back in their lives.
Dogs vision.

FAWCETT (cont'd) ~~we're radio-active ! It's got in our bones --- driving us mad !~~

STUBB ~~Shut up !~~

DOG (his head still buried) 'You're as limp as a rag,' she said, 'Why the hell did I marry you ? --- at that dance I thought you had a truncheon in your trousers --- and now look !' That's what she said ---

The other two gaze at him. They sit down again. Silence.

FAWCETT (quietly) We used to have quite a ritual round here. Remember what Dog used to say (to STUBB) ? --- the stars have a rhythm, so have we, so has the moon, and it's the same one !

STUBB (gazing at DOG) He used to bless the cabin once a month with Greek water. Half-an-hour's silence at nightfall. We had some style in our life then ! Look at him now !

DOG (murmuring) But you hated me for it ! Well, you've got your democracy now ! (Suddenly) It's funny --- I was wider awake than I've ever been before but---!

STUBB What's that ?

DOG In the Eskimo trance --- that's right ! --- (Radiantly) I saw a new land, a land where she's been leading us all this time, you can laugh at Gabriel, you can kill her if you like --- you've done it, you've killed my dreams --- but she's leading us there --- I remember it now --- you can call her what you like --- you can call her Dave's whore or my little Ashanti boy ... !

FAWCETT I swear you was dead in that trance, Dog --- we tried your breath on a piece of glass !

DOG I saw the new land --- right before my eyes --- and the three guys sitting there --- at Gillis's Grave --- !

FAWCETT (startled) Gillis's Grave ?

DOG That's where she led them ! And they just sat down out of joy and thought they was dead --- because they was alive for the very first time --- ! They just sat down and died of joy ! And one of the guys --- I'll never forget ! --- he was trailing a

(17)

Tamilized.

DOG (cont'd) frying pan - he ran maybe ten or fifteen miles along the rim of a hill, up the trap-line, behind the other guys, I remember this frying pan clanging against the trees, it clanged for ten or fifteen miles, along the rim of the hill --- he must have been strong --- he must have had some constitution --- it was fear that gave him the strength maybe --- his eyes was popping out of his head !

FAWCETT I never heard of people dying of joy ---

DOG You'd say they died of cold --- they reached the snow-line --- they had no --- ! (He stops with a perplexed expression) They had no gunshot ---

STUBB What's that ?

FAWCETT Listen, Dog, I'd like to go down !

DOG I'll never forget that frying pan clanging along --- In the woods, at the rim of the hill ! And everything was so clean, so cool, the further you went, the sounds were so clear --- For fifteen miles ! And then the snow-line !

FAWCETT (with his startled look, gazing up) This is the best home I ever had !

DOG Me, too !

A shot very close by. They jump again.

STUBB Hey !

DOG Sssh !

They listen intently.

STUBB (whispering) He's just round the corner !

DOG (also whispering) He can't be ! You can't walk through that bush without rustling a leaf !

STUBB He must have crept ---

They sit quite still, peering at the door.

DOG (suddenly calling out) Young Dave ! Young Dave ! Is that you out there ? (A pause) Come and join us !

Dead silence.

FAWCETT ~~(in a whisper) Why should his name be Young Dave~~ --- just because his dad's ---

DOG It's what we've always called him !

STUBB (in an animated whisper) Dave never told his son's name ! (To FAWCETT) I reckon I know why, too ! --- he's the son of a whore !

FAWCETT Go on !

STUBB Amy made a mistake one night --- she --- !

DOG (sharply) That's enough ! We don't have scandal ~~up here~~ !

A twig breaks near by.

STUBB Hey !

They listen, their eyes wide.

FAWCETT (still whispering) He's spying on us ! With orders to shoot if we try to leave !

DOG (calling out again, but more tremulously) Son of Dave ! Son of Dave !

There isn't a sound.

FAWCETT It's the smudge ! I threw some twigs on the smudge this morning ! (But he is trembling)

STUBB That's where the shot came from --- the last shot !

DOG I can feel something's there !

FAWCETT It's the smudge, I tell you --- I can see the smoke --- !

STUBB It's somebody moving --- !

FAWCETT It's Young Dave taking the mike --- he plays the fool --- ! (Trembling violently)

DOG (suddenly, at the top of his voice) Come out, you son-of-a-bitch, come on out.

His voice echoes away and there is dead silence.

STUBB (frantically, to DOG) It's you get's us laughed at with your dreams !

FAWCETT — That's right. (But still trembling) Remember when he hid from the cops over at Dave's cabin ? Ran out of the shop with his beard flying --- Dave's face fell a mile --- !

DOG — (shouting) Except that you ran with me !

FAWCETT — (his teeth chattering) What ?

DOG — With your coat-tails flying !

FAWCETT — I ran because you ran !

DOG — We all ran together.

FAWCETT — And all the cops did was sit there and play cards, and we stayed in the bushes and watched 'em --- for three hours or more ! And I think they --- kept --- chuckling ! (His teeth chatter so much that he can hardly talk)

STUBB — That's right ! And Dave said on the radio, 'What was you scared of, boys ?' afterwards ! With that little twinkle !

They listen again but nothing moves.

FAWCETT — It's the smudge, I tell you ---

DOG — (calling out again) Got the mail, Dave's son ?

Silence.

Suddenly there is a shot almost where they stand.

They are all shivering violently.

STUBB — (clutching hold of DOG) Somebody's moving --- ! (Pointing)

They stand close together, gaping at the spot the shot came from.

DOG — (with a peculiar wild triumph) They've come --- to get us ! They're surrounding us, boys !

STUBB — The seven hundred --- !

FAWCETT — (with horror) The hole in the wall --- !

DOG — (shouting) Get the packs on your backs !

They all scramble over each other trying to get their packs on, picking up their rifles, kicking the bottles over.

FAWCETT doesn't succeed in getting his pack on because of the frying pan he has strapped on.

DOG — Hammer a note on the table for Dave --- an S.O.S.---! (Diving at one of the store-chests and pulling out a large hammer and some long nails) A pencil, quick ! An S.O.S. --- we're going up the trapline --- further up --- !

STUBB — (trembling feeling in his pockets for a pencil) You're bushed !

There is another shot, immediately by them.

DOG — Quick !

He drops the hammer and nails and he and STUBB dash off, with their packs and guns. We hear DOG shout:

They've come to get us, Stubb !

FAWCETT is left alone, hopelessly trembling as he tries to get the pack on his back and pick up his rifle at the same time. The frying pan trails.

FAWCETT — (frantically) Stubb ! Stubb ! STUBB !

STUBB reappears.

STUBB — (taking hold of him) Quick !

FAWCETT — (still trying to get the pack up) Stubb, the frying pan --- the frying pan --- !

STUBB — Come on !

He pulls FAWCETT off, and the last we see of the latter is the frying pan --- he is trailing his pack along by the straps, with the frying pan clattering behind.

FAWCETT — (as he goes off) The frying pan !

We hear it clanging along behind him. It dies away slowly. Silence.

Huskies bark close by, then there is silence again.

After a long pause YOUNG DAVE enters, a youth of fifteen or sixteen. He has a gun slung over his shoulder, a small pack and a belt of ammunition.

He is gloved and heavily booted.

He stares round at all the disorder. He takes a thick bundle of letters out of his pack and puts them on the table.

Suddenly a bird flies over: he runs to the window to take aim but is too late.

Then he leaves and tries to close the door behind him. But there is no lock and it swings on its hinges. He kicks it closed a second time but again it swings open.

He re-enters the cabin, clearly wondering where to leave the letters, for fear they will blow away. He sees the hammer and long nails. With one sure, smart stroke he drives a nail into the letters and fixes them on the table.

He leaves in a hurry. The door swings behind him.

There is silence.

The radio blinks S.O.S.

There appear to be quite a number of letters there. Our attention is concentrated on them as the curtain falls. We can already imagine the rats nibbling them.

C U R T A I N

ESKIMO TRANCE at Theatre in the Round, Stoke-on-Trent
by Benedict Nightingale

THE audience seemed glad to disappear into the relative snugness of the Potteries after the shivers this gave. Maurice Rowdon's new play concerns three men—petty thieves, it seems, and down-and-outers—who have shut themselves away in North Canadian trapping territory. Each spends his days constructing fantasies for himself, in which he plays defrocked minister or cuckolded husband or what you will, and sometimes varies it by taking part in reconstruction of the myths created by his partners in silence. Truth and illusion have elided into an inseparable jumble—hence, much of the difficulty of the play.

But it is about more than the effect of isolation on the mind. Mr Rowdon is using people and setting as a microcosm in which man, dominated by the constant threat of death, clearly needs both self-deception and the sense of belonging in a supernatural order if he is to survive. It is obviously significant that the leading trapper calls himself Dog (the play fairly seethes with symbols, most less obvious than this) and there are frequent references to the deity and snatches of Bible. At the end, when all illusions have been smashed and the trappers troop forlornly out to freeze in the snow, it isn't clear whether this betokens some possible salvation or just emptiness. Mr Rowdon, as well he might, leaves the audience to puzzle out the old problem of after-life for itself.

Actually, I sensed in the reception something of the boredom one used to feel during the bleaker scripture lesson at school, a pity. Mr Rowdon (a novelist and travel writer, by the way, who lives in Italy) does seem to write a bit flatly and uninventively sometimes: we feel the tedium of the tedium too much. But he has a good grasp of dialogue and character, and he uses them to ask really interesting, far-reaching questions.

Terence Davies, Tony Handy, and Anton Vogel soldier through it all bravely. I particularly liked Mr Handy's Welshman: solemn intensity with just a hint of levity at the back of it. Director: Peter Cheeseman.

A long nightmare journey to compulsion of stark New Vic play

If this review reads like an attempt to make sense out of a dream, with fantasy and truth mixed up, it is the after-effects of getting into the "Eskimo Trance" at the Victoria Theatre, Hartshill, last night.

In writing about being in a trance, therefore, I am expressing a very personal point of view in saying that I finally reached a surprised state of compulsion, after graduating through near-boredom, during this new play about three fur trappers in the white wastes of Northern Canada.

It is a first attempt at playwriting by Maurice Rowdon, whose previous literary experience has been as a novelist and travel writer, and his work has the bleakly realistic approach of a documentary reporter of human nature which suggests the influence of Russian and Scandinavian masters.

His isolated trio are British, but the atmosphere he generates is far removed from these shores in the sense that I could have believed the writer was still up there himself in his log cabin if I had not met him afterwards.

My own feeling is that the audience has to get into that cabin and share this sense of isolation to get absorbed in the dementia which creeps slowly into the minds of such cut-off people.

I managed it, after persevering with it as though getting into a difficult book, but I must report honestly that a lot of people in last night's premiere audience clearly never got into the trance.

Memory of sin

This was certainly no reflection on the efforts of the New Vic Trio, who played themselves to exhaustion, as football reporters sometimes say. Anton Vogel, with his rough-looking beard, had the best appearance and the most convincing manner of the three; the other two, Tony Handy and Terence Davies, were still in our hemisphere when they needed something less recognisable in this unfamiliar dramatic territory.

These three have opted for their white dreamland as preferable to the hard reality of their failure to cope properly with life in the civilised world and Anton Vovel gave me the most satisfying impression of a man slowly freezing up with only the memory of his sins, and those of the other two, to keep him company.

Terence Davies, a good comedian who seems to be stuck with his northern accent in every part, is the often-unconscious humorist, which sets him apart from the others and breaks up the monotony of some of Mr. Rowdon's repetitive passages.

Tony Handy is soundly Welsh, although that is not vitally important, and was so successful in his portrayal of hopeless inadequacy that he might have been one of those lost, lonely souls spreading out his life over a 22-year regular army engagement.

My only general criticism of the performance is that the actors sometimes tend to build up false tensions by trying to give too much significance to it all. They would be well advised to play it down a bit.

Mr. Rowdon has yet to learn about the dramatic opportunities available in the theatre, but his first play has a stark strength and savagely clear thinking in parts, even if it is only a dream.

J.S.A.

ESKIMO TRANCE--- Index of Terms.

White-trapping is trapping by laying strychnine poisoning, illegal because the husky dogs can pick it up. A trapper's word for swinish.

Smudge is a fire lit near the hut to keep mosquitoes away: it smoulders gently day and night.

Cache is a structure on poles to keep provisions on, so that the grizzly bears can't climb up and take it at night.

PAS was a famous prospector's station earlier this century: saloons, whorehouses, a few shops (for rye whisky). PRINCE GEORGE was the same. ESKIMO POINT and CHURCHILL were where the trappers traded their pelts. Radium was found at ECHO POINT, as the play says. BASKERVILLE, mentioned in Act 2 with ridicule, was a shanty town from the goldrush days.

pitchblend ore---a kind of gold; assay means to test this ore in the laboratory; it cost five pounds in the Twenties.

de luxe prospectors were the speculators, not the men who did the actual prospecting and staking out of the ground.

white-fox---the foxes trapped in the snowy regions of course.

angekok---the Eskimo medicine man, as the play says.

the old telegraph trail---this first telephonic trail in the NW Territories was laid by trappers, mostly by a Frenchman on horseback, a wild, godfearing, drunken man. The flowers mentioned in the play (p. 21) are those actually to be found there.

cockroach---I've adapted this from the Italian: meaning priest.

placer gold in the gravel bars of the river: the river beds were dredged for gold; placer means the sands or gravel bed that contained valuable minerals.

tailings---refuse from the gold-dredging.

THE ESKIMO TRANCE.

If I were asked what kind of play this was I would think first of WAITING FOR GODOT and THE ICEMAN COMETH.

The scene is a 'nuclear outpost' at the northern edge of Canada: exactly what kind we don't know. The three men---DOG, STUBB and FAWCETT---have been sent up here to keep guard, 'trim the grass', answer the radio. They've been given a trapper's hut (probably it belongs to one of the old trapping routes) and have learned trapping and pelt-stretching more to keep themselves amused than anything. Most of this we learn only towards the end of the play.

There are two acts. In the first these men deceive each other and above all themselves into believing that they are real trappers and that in the old days they lived really adventurous lives, gold-prospecting and radium-prospecting and whoring. They tell themselves that they're up here on a foolish bet they made down at Pas, a prospector's town: to see how long they could 'stand the silence'. They've been up here for over three years now, in the silence, and clearly they're going 'bushed'---trapper's language for crazy.

But in Act 11 DOG, partly provoked by the others, skilfully leads them to the truth. The truth is that outside their trapper's hut there is a concrete emplacement with barbed wire all round, a 'tower', unexplained generators. And the significance of the radio is explained to us. The three of them really feel they will never see civilisation again: DAVE, whose son appears at the end of the play for a moment or two, chose them for the job because he was after people who'd clearly 'given up'. And he told them to keep their mouths shut. No one visits them. DOG goes down for the mail, the arrival of which is signalled across to them by a red flag. Significantly other people seem to avoid him when he visits the other station.

Are they radio-active? would they be quietly got rid of if they did try to break their contract and go 'down'? These are the frightful questions put towards the end of the play. But we see that what chiefly prevents them from going down is their lassitude, which comes from a sense of having committed terrible crimes.

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They've each run away from their own lives in England, and they can't face themselves. They can't exactly say what their crimes have been. They even get their supposed crimes mixed up, and accuse each other of what they secretly accuse themselves; they even accept roles which the others attribute to them, though these are manifestly false---for instance, FAWCETT accepts STUBB's idiotic assertion that he was the lodger in South London who seduced his wife; partly FAWCETT does this to excite STUBB sexually. And STUBB suddenly says that DOG was the policeman who nearly arrested him for beating his wife; though he and DOG never met before they came to Canada.

They lie, romance to each other, get their stories mixed up. It is almost as if we were listening to the confused story of humanity itself...

DOG has several names, though he only owns to one of them at a time, with great earnestness.

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They are in danger all the time, frightened all the time: this is what makes their cosy dreams necessary. Surely things are all right? Surely the past is still there? And this past is the nineteenth century: the 'construction days' in trapper's language, and the period in which our modern world, with its nuclear posts as well, was constructed. All three characters were in fact too young to know the construction days but they look back to them as if Baskerville, Pas etc (the goldrush shanty towns) were still there, and they get a daredevil feeling from doing so. But they're not daredevil: they haven't even ordinary sexual energies, as we see towards the end of the play; they're too terrified perhaps, too 'bushed'.

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And the play---their lives---is dominated and haunted by one story, which is repeated again and again throughout, the story of Gillis's Grave at Manson Creek. This is a genuine trapper's story. Three trappers were found dead without a mark on their bodies: the door of their hut was swinging open; their mail was nailed to the table, except that when it was found it had been mostly gnawed by rats. Was it terror that killed them? cold? hunger? 'joy'?---DOG even suggests 'joy', in a strange mood. All through the play we are given explanations of what might have happened to these three trappers. And at the end we realise that these men are no less than the three trappers themselves. In a strange way they have been talking about themselves. Here is the significance of the loose, 'hanging door' in the stage directions (P. 1), and of DAVE'S SON's final act, a minute before the end of the play, when with one firm stroke he hammers the mail on to the table; and in the light that plays on that mail as the curtain goes down we can already see the rats beginning to nibble at it... The trappers have fulfilled a destiny beyond their control.

And at the end we see that perhaps FAWCETT was right---they may have been radio-active: is DAVE'S SON in a fall-out suit? or are those heavy gloves and boots normal wear for the bush?

The play should of course mystify, but it shouldn't confuse or frustrate the understanding.

The actors should tremble violently, weep, get over-excited rather like clowns. At times they should seem to burlesque our cosy day-to-day forms of address. They are a clown trio caught in a terrifying situation. Hence, my mention of WAITING FOR GODOT. Did you see the Berlin production of this, at the Schloss Park Theater? That is exactly the sort of spellbound tension, sparkling in bright light, that I would like. I imagine light shining into their faces fiercely---showing every tear, squint. These three men quarrel suddenly and violently and are then easy together in a pleasant, reminiscing conversation: here is the reason for my mentioning THE ICEMAN COMETH. It all plays out as conversation, in the same sort of rhythm as they achieved in the Arts production of that play some years ago.

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And now to its connection with our life. Everything we see before us---all the junkshop and ornamentation and marvellous cosiness we have inherited from the nineteenth century---could disappear in a moment if something went wrong; if, as the papers say, a certain trigger was pulled... But perhaps things are going wrong now and at this moment,

all the time, so that we too are rather like clowns play-acting the past because we are in the midst of the most frightful terror that has existed on the earth. We are surrounded---some of the cancer specialists tell us--- by cancer-causing agents all day long, in the air we breathe, in the soil, in the food we eat; twenty years will pass before the results are observable in our children. Has the earth been contaminated for generations to come? are we contaminated? are our children born with the damage already done to them? have we already wrecked life for them and ourselves not only with atomic explosions and missiles that cause earthquakes and floods on a hitherto unknown scale but with insecticides that flow under the earth and decimate wild life and hang about in our own livers in dangerous volumes? These are silly and pathetic questions---the Englishman's word 'cranky' covers them. But we are silly and pathetic people in the face of problems which even the scientists themselves are unable to answer. We can only go on asking them. For the terror of it is that we have been given no guarantee that the answer is NO. Our lives therefore hang on the finest thread of ignorance; we live from day to day---keeping our fingers crossed; none of us know what is being done in our name, none of us can say with authority that the atomic worker who shot himself and his family recently on the grounds that he was contaminated was wrong. The matter was hushed immediately, as was the recent accidental explosion in Texas. Then we live in the midst of a terror so enormous that we cannot recognise it, cannot verify it.

Yet of course this isn't a moral play about the Bomb.

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Finally, there is the religious theme of the play, represented by DOG. The name DOG, as STUBB tells us, is God spelled the other way round. In Tudor times 'Dog' was often used to mean God, in the religious persecutions. DOG'S power (like all power in the end) is through the imagination. He is the only one of the three with real belief: and he is so far gone---'bushed'---that he believes he's in touch with the sky, to the extent of being able to will the rifle shots outside; they are secret 'answers' to him. And there is a bit of political cunning in this too (as there is in all great Churches): he to some extent plays on STUBB's and FAWCETT's gullibility; he is their politics, too---as we see in the 'election' at the beginning of the play.

Imaginative people can produce the world they want; other people, the cosy ones like STUBB and FAWCETT, inhabit this world as if it were the only one possible. I take 'Poets are the legislators of the world' to mean this.

In the end (Act 11) DOG puts his and their faith to the test by trading their pelts not for gunshot but for rye-whisky--- and rye doesn't protect you against grizzly bears when you go out hunting. 'That's the idea,' he says, 'for God to help you if he wants to.'

And this is partly why they're all up here: to see what life is really like, whether there is something behind the silence all round us. In a way, they---through DOG---are so absorbed by the question that they rush into the silence at the end, that is, to their deaths. Only the story of the three trappers at Gillis's Grave proves, among so many stories in the play, to be true.

DOG's trance at the beginning of Act 11, the Eskimo Trance, is his personal and mystical method of reaching the truth and at the same time gaining power over the others. His story of

the Great White Bear eating him up and spitting him out again is part of the Eskimo mystical discipline; you have to wait for the Bear in a sort of trance before you can have healing powers as a medicine man. It is also a sort of dying, as in Buddhist meditation, and of course STUBB and FAWCETT, being ordinary men, think each time that he has actually died. And just as he sees the truth in his trance, so they begin to talk the real truth to each other while he is 'dead'.

It is DOG who creates the aurora of power and prestige for the other two; he is the element of 'ceremony' that fascinates us through the ages. The reference to his having been on the Gold Coast as a bodyguard (policeman) and to his possibly having seduced a little native boy in Government House is part of this: the man's world, Empire, the English public school. The king he mentions, Prempel, did actually paint the walls of his palace red with human blood, as DOG says. This is all part of the lurid (now historical) world of power that the three characters conjure up for themselves, each in his different way. That world was all based on men's prowess. All gone now. At the end of the play we learn that far from having had adventurous lives the three of them led squalid and tame lives: STUBB addressed envelopes for a fake pelt firm, FAWCETT worked as a lavatory attendant and drilled a hole through to the ladies' lavatory, and DOG worked on the municipal council; as STUBB says, DOG came over to Canada on a de luxe liner---carrying coal!

ESKIMO TRANCE should be played urgently, at a great speed but without any sense of hurried nerves. An atmosphere of tense fear and foreboding. The climax at the end, when we see that they are no less than the three trappers we've been hearing about all the time, and FAWCETT panicks, should be quite terrifying.
